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Compendium of all my knowl
edge of Mary fo
r Clara

STRATHALLAN.

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BY

ALICIA LEFANU,

GRAND-DAUGHTER TO THE LATE THOMAS SHERIDAN, M.A.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

Quando scende in nobil petto
E compagno un dolce affetto
Non rivale alla virtù :
Respirate, alme felici
E vi siano i Numi amici
Quanto avverso il ciel vi fū.

METASTASIO.—DEMETRIO.

London :

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1816.



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STRATHALLAN.

CHAPTER I.

Ah ! perdona al primo affetto,
Quest' accento sconsigliato,
Colpa fu del labbro usato,
A chimarti ognor così.

METASTASIO. *LA CLEMENZA DI TITO.*

“WHY need you venture your health and your life in that infected air, amidst that mingled mass of houses and graves called a great city; surrounded by the smoke and pestilent vapours of every different trade and manufactory; when, here, you can have leisure, independence, solitude, or society as you will?”

Such was Sowerby's abrupt exclamation, on Mrs. Melbourne's first hinting the necessity of her returning to London. He then

proceeded, “ You know that pretty little box called Woodbine Lodge, which you admired so much for its situation : it is mine, I lent it to young Mendlesham, who is just quitting it ; so that I can let you have it, and I am sure if you would take it, it would be a blessed exchange. I obliged him with it, because his father was an old chum of mine, and I never ceased fretting, and wishing him out of it from the moment he got in it. He used it as a hunting lodge, but it would not be too small for two ladies ; and there Matilda might have her harp, and you might have your books and drawings ; it is only a walk across the park, so that I should be near enough sometimes to drop in upon you, and forget, in your society, the miserable forlorn condition of solitary man.”

Mrs. Melbourne easily saw into Sowerby’s real motive for wishing her and Matilda to give up London ; which was, by fixing them near him, to secure some compensation for the loss of Clara’s society, whom he had vainly hoped to induce to live with him. The gentle nun, now her health was re-

established, considered every hour she spent away from her convent as a crime; and Sowerby saw himself about to be deprived, at once, of the little female society that had chased away the gloom from his solitary hearth, just as he began to acquire a taste for its charms. Could Mrs. Melbourne behold this constant and active friend of her adversity sinking under the gloom and depression induced by desertion and disappointment? She read his feelings; and, without taking counsel with any one, or communicating the conflicts that rent her heart, she, with unpretending greatness at once made her election. “ ‘Tis but one pang more,” she said, “ and surely I who have endured so many may easily learn to bear it.”

To fix herself in the neighbourhood of the Rocks was to tear open the wounds of her widowed heart; yet still, the idea of its being a sacrifice, a sacrifice too for a man, whom it was impossible a mind perhaps, perhaps, to a degree of artificial refinement, could regard with partiality, added, perhaps, a secret charm to her resolution, in the opinion

of a woman firm and energetic in all her decisions as Mrs. Melbourne. However defective in manner, his late conduct had evinced the sterling goodness of his heart. To make the widow and child of his friend forget, in his attentions, the loss they had sustained, seemed the chief object of his life; and a remembrance of Melbourne, that shone in almost every word he addressed them, and in his most indifferent actions, imparted to them an interest that a more courteous and polished deportment might have failed to inspire. These circumstances Mrs. Melbourne represented to Sir Harold in the communication she made to him respecting her wish to give up the house in town. To speak of the obligations of friendship and gratitude was to speak conviction to the amiable Baronet. He highly approved of the motives that determined her conduct. And as for Mr. Sowerby, when once he had arranged her removal, he was so anxious to secure the house for her, and seemed so eager to prevent his friend Mendlesham from changing his mind, that he might have appeared to an in-

different observer, already weary of the long abode she had made at his own. Clara entreated she might have every moment of the company of her friends till the hour arrived for her departure ; but Sowerby would have hurried them immediately into the new house, though he confessed himself it was in want of some repairs ; and when they objected to the smell of paint, or the feel of damp mortar, flew into as great a passion with the weakness and fastidiousness of the sex, as if they had proposed the most unreasonable objection in the world.

Mrs. Melbourne good-humouredly rallied him on his impatience to turn them away ; "I understand your friend," said she, "made a kennel of every room in the house. You will not surely have the inhumanity to move us 'till those holes are stopped up that his canine favorites gnawed through the doors, or rather 'till you have put up new ones."

"There are no holes," muttered Sowerby, and, when obliged to confess there were, he still would not allow it as a sufficient reason for delay. "The doors are mended, the

shutters are fast, the rooms are painted, the paint is dry, there are no dogs, and now will you take possession?" Who would have imagined that this obliging requisition was only the singular manner in which this mixture of misanthropy and benevolence endeavoured to secure the company of two most valuable women, whom he wished for life as his neighbours. Mrs. Melbourne knew it, and while she smiled at his uncourtly demonstrations of anxiety, felt that they proceeded from sincere solicitude for her comfort and convenience. And when he roughly reproached her for not hastening the removal of various articles to her new house, or vented his spleen in some of his usual exclamations against the procrastination of women, she ceased to complain of his whimsical peculiarities, when she recollect ed the motive for all this bustling impatience. He was a friend, whose generosity and kindness were not to be questioned ; although, from some strange caprice or absurd notion of petty œconomy, he might give his guests black tea instead of green ; or wear his favourite old black coat

till it was necessary, for his respectability, that he should be as well known as he was throughout the country, for rich Squire Sowerby, of Clifden-down.

The parting between Clara and Matilda was affecting to both. Matilda acknowledged, in Clara, the blessed instrument who had first roused her from the torpor of selfish despair ; she loved her society as much as she respected her character ; for, to the serenity attendant on her complete and absolute renunciation, such native sensibility was added, that the tranquillity of manner, which was the result of the former, partook rather of the nature of heavenly calm, than of that cold indifference, which sometimes marks a recluse.

Matilda had often asked herself why the same quality which displeased her in Lady Strathallan should be found so attractive in Clara ; it was that the perfection of tranquillity, the prevailing feature in the minds of both, was in the one the result of softness, in the other of hardness of character.

Sowerby was not long in paying his promised visit to his neighbours, and, after every

fresh call appeared to have imbibed an additional relish for social and domestic pleasure. Though fortunate in his researches, and enjoying respect and admiration for his talents, those pursuits that had been his pride and pleasure he found insufficient to gild the evening of his days ; and he now seemed to envy every one who, surrounded by friends on whom nature gave him a claim, was not obliged to look abroad for the amusement of a heavy hour. “ It was well that pert, smart girl, your familiar, changed her mind in time,” he said, in speaking to Miss Melbourne of Arbella ; “ for when I go back to that old house I feel so queer and dismal, I verily believe I should still be tempted to make her mistress of it ; but it is better as it is, for you, Matilda.” That it should be the ‘ better for her,’ was a circumstance Miss Melbourne never suffered to enter into her calculation ; and she sincerely wished her friend reconciled to Mr. Sowerby for both their sakes. Notwithstanding the sanguine hopes of the young lady herself, she thought she saw Arbella’s fate drawing towards no

very pleasant crisis, and wished to snatch her, if it was yet possible, from the sneers of those who had first drawn her into folly; if it is said that she wished for her friend a fate which she would not have chosen for herself, let it be remembered that Arbella had, by her own imprudence, restricted herself in the power of choice: that she had given Matilda ample reason to believe love was not essential to her happiness; and every other sentiment her respected friend was capable of inspiring.

Julia Melbourne, who divided her time pretty equally between Woodbine Lodge and the Rocks, was at once the solace of her brother and Matilda; her gaiety was now increased by the frequent society of Lady Emily Fitzroy, who, whenever she could escape from the ostentatious kindness of her mother, or the sententious reprimands of her sister-in-law, hastened to secure an hour of ease, confidence, and real instruction at the Lodge. Hither she was often followed by Strathallan, who did not like Mr. Sowerby, of Clifden-down; but who, now he could see

his amiable friends without that unwelcome addition to their society, seemed to think it his duty to pursue his little truant sister to the covert where he was always sure of finding her concealed. He wished to encrease in Lady Strathallan a taste for society, which, to him had so many charms. Often in his gayest hours he had been heard to declare that he preferred Mrs. Melbourne's conversation to that of the youngest or most beautiful woman of his acquaintance; and he thought it impossible but that a female mind, must be still more sensible of merit so distinguished, when discovered in her own sex. Lady Strathallan's passion for him was so great, that had not her mind been as unbending as her body, she would really, in compliance with his inclinations, have endeavoured to like the society that was most congenial to his taste; but though a *belle-esprit* by profession, she was far from finding the solace and amusement she wished for in private, in the intercourse of minds so much superior to her own. She soon civilly withdrew herself from a scene so little suited to her

usual pursuits and habits, leaving her husband to the enjoyment of a dangerous pleasure, of which he seemed to have lost the salutary dread, which had, till now, alone secured his peace of mind, without acquiring that indifference which would have been its safe and desirable substitute. As more frequent opportunities of intercourse allowed Matilda to observe the change that the recent circumstances had wrought upon his character, she could not help surveying, with regret, the complete dejection into which a mind so noble seemed plunged, and asking herself if the sacrifice made to the welfare of his family, were not perhaps too much. His manners retained all their fascinating sweetness, but the varying graces of his conversation, from the proudest bursts of a noble and impassioned spirit, to tenderness the most seductive, or gaiety the most enchanting, were lost, or hid under an habitual pensiveness; calm, settled, and unchanged. A sadness soft, but ever-during, and soul-felt, that modulated every accent, and unconsciously pervaded every look and motion, constantly re-

minded those who remembered his former self, that he had bid farewell to happiness, and that his future life was a blank. By degrees this settled sorrow began to give way, and transient flashes of his former animation to return. Matilda did not know whether she should most desire or fear the change.

One evening that she had been requested by Emily to indulge her in a lesson of music, to which she promised to apply herself assiduously, she had proposed removing her harp to the garden, the weather was so fine. The parlour windows opened upon it; the air was so rich and balmy, the flowers around them so fresh, that the young lady, who never too much liked application, soon changed her request, for a lesson, into one for a song, accompanied by Matilda. In this request she was warmly joined by Julia, who really idolized music, and Matilda, in complying with the wishes of her young friends, soon gave the reins to fancy, and forgot she had begun in compliance with their request; when, throwing her arms carelessly over the strings, she indulged in the strains most dear to taste.

and memory, till the evening was declining, and the “crimsoned West” was illuminated with the last parting beams of day before she thought of retiring. While thus engaged, Lord Strathallan stole in upon the domestic group, pleased to find Matilda so employed, he gave the young ladies a sign not to interrupt the harmony; and taking his station in silence by the harp, seemed for a few moments lost in the delicious emotions suggested by the scene. Whether remembrance had some share in his pleasure, and the vernal airs, the low accompaniment of birds now flitting to their nests, the fragrance, harmony and bloom around, which reminded him of a former evening so spent, or whether it owed its enchantment to itself alone, was uncertain. Matilda, her whole soul given up to song, appeared for once almost insensible of his presence; and was only recalled to a painful consciousness of it, by his exclaiming as she concluded, in the words of the impassioned address to Imoinda,

“ Sing, sing again,

“ And let me wonder at the many ways

“ You have to charm me.”

She started, and with an air more cold and constrained than she had ever before assumed, called her young friends and turned towards the house. They had left her and were at the other end of the garden.

“ Nay, I will have that poor request complied with,” cried Strathallan; “ you see Emily and Julia are too wise to give up the pleasures of this enchanting evening so soon; one more song,” he continued, playfully taking hold of her hands, while she suffered herself to be reseated, in order to end the importunity of his solicitation; she excused herself, however, from singing more, and assured him she really had a cold, which made such an exertion unpleasant to her.

“ You have always a cold, I think when I ask you to sing,” said Strathallan, with a discontented air. She was distress at his manner. The expression of pique is so nearly related to that of partiality, that to avoid giving it the consequence it might otherwise have assumed, she complied; yet it was with no blush, no conscious terror, but rather with a gravity, which convinced Strathallan of

what he never before would believe, that it was possible for Matilda to perform an action with an ill-grace. Her voice was low, her playing languid, spiritless, almost tasteless.

At the end of the song she rose abruptly. “I think, my Lord, you cannot find it necessary to detain me any longer.”

“Unnecessary indeed,” murmured Strathallan, and though he spent an hour with the ladies in the house, before he took away the ‘little truant,’ the evening, for the first time, passed heavily, and they parted with a formality which had lately been banished from their little circle; from that moment the frank ingenuousness of Matilda’s manner was no more; and, though she carefully avoided any reference to the past, she often availed herself of any pretext to be dispensed from joining the party when he was there. Weary of this constraint, Strathallan resolved to attempt an explanation with Miss Melbourne, or at least entreat she would restore to him the confidence which had imparted the greatest pleasure to his existence. The next declining sun-set saw him at the low green gate,

which, opening upon their unpretending garden, led to the small white house where the mother and daughter dwelt. He found the fair one alone and busied with her vegetable cares, reminding him of the poet's Isabella, when intent to

“ Bind the straggling pink ;
Cheer the sweet rose, the lupin, and the stock,
And leud a staff to the still gadding pea.”

After a moment's common-place enquiry on both sides, Strathallan, in a slow hesitating manner, said, “ I fear, Miss Melbourne, I have unintentionally done something to offend you.”

Matilda knew too well the harmony in which a conversation generally ends, which begins with “ I fear I have offended you,” to risk listening to dangerous reproaches, or specious apologies ; therefore raising her blue eyes, with a sweet smile of innocence, and candour, which would have instantly restored peace to a mind that had entertained such apprehensions, and no others ; she replied, “ Lord Strathallan can never offend

me, but in imagining me so capricious and unreasonable, as to feel displeased without a cause." Strathallan was rather confused at this reply; he would have preferred a complaint, which might have afforded him an opportunity of justification: and turning his discourse from his own embarrassment, to the flowers, he continued, "this is an elegant amusement; but you who possess so much real botanic science, ought not to content yourself with rearing a few plants just to please the eye. You must have a green house. I know Mrs. Melbourne loves one, and I should have such pleasure in adding to your collection any rare plant out of Lady Torrendale's conservatory, which she never enters. How I shall like to see you, like another, and a purer, Eve, marshal them in their ranks, 'and give them names,' and then watch, as they bloom again beneath your forming pencil."

"Fortune, my Lord, that has put it out of our power, to indulge in many innocent pleasures, has, at the same time, taught us a les-

son of content and resignation to whatever may be her allotment."

"Oh would she could teach it to us all," Strathallan whispered: but there was something in Matilda's eye, that, he knew not how, checked the utterance even of this apparently simple wish; and, glad to recur to the first subject of conversation, he continued, "perhaps you are weary of that trifling style of drawing; I have some views taken in this neighbourhood, and some representing the most bold picturesque spots near—near Strath—allan: they are by a very deserving young artist, and were intended by my father, who thinks she has a decided talent for drawing, as a present for Emily. But I think she is quite unequal to them, and if you would wish to sketch them, I will call with them to-morrow. I think they would please you, and I shall delight to correct and watch your progress."

"Excuse me, my Lord, I never attempt landscape."

"Now are you in that provoking humour,"

resumed his Lordship, half laughing, to dissemble his pique, "that if I were to ask you to read, work, sing, or what you will, you would answer, 'excuse me, my Lord, I never read, I never work, I never sing. Those delightful reading parties! indeed I miss them—you know what an idolater I was of Mrs. Melbourne's voice."

" You may hear it now—she is reading in the parlour with Julia—she will be glad of the addition of your Lordship's company, and I will follow."

She waved her snowy hand towards the house—Strathallan stood disconcerted—" bewitching trifler!" Then resuming his former argument, "is not this disingenuous, Miss Melbourne? What cause have I given you to mistrust me, that you will not say at once, ' Lord Strathallan, you have displeased me:' there is no reparation I am not ready to make; but instead of that, you content yourself with shewing that I have done so, by every minute word and action."

" I am quite unconscious of deserving

these reproaches," Matilda murmured, while her complexion, as she bent over the roses, gradually assumed a more animated hue than their glowing cups.

" Then do not again," resumed Strathallan, in a persuasive tone, " let me see that I am a restraint upon your occupations, a damp upon your pleasures. Prove I am not that formidable being, by letting me hear you and Julia resume your charming harp duetts this evening. I had brought her some lessons of Kozeluch's, to try yesterday morning, but, as usual, the ladies were out. Will you let her favour me so far this evening?"

" Mere children's play, my Lord, such as could not be interesting to you. I may surely give Julia's performance literally that name."

" It is such children's play," resumed Lord Strathallan, energetically, " as angels might lean from their spheres to listen to. When I see your little Julia, with her miniature harp by your side, catching from your lips the inspiration of those heavenly strains, I think I see an already beatified spirit,

training an infant cherub for the skies. So sweetly does she in her genius, her soft serious deportment, and already perfect beauty, resemble—almost resemble you. And shall Emily, who is a sweet amiable girl, but who has no soul for pathos, no susceptibility to the charms of music, be admitted to share a gratification, from which I alone am excluded? indeed it is shewing the sister too much partiality, and too much severity to the brother!"

"Heavens! what a comparison!" exclaimed Matilda, who now raised her eyes, in which perturbation, distress, and alarm, were visibly pictured.

"Then may I hope," continued his Lordship, who mistook her agitation for conviction, "that, in future, our former pursuits shall be resumed, and that we shall sing, and read, and draw, and ride out, with our former delightful freedom, and—"

He spoke so fast, that Matilda found it difficult to interrupt him; but, at the first pause, she, with a deep drawn sigh, and a look that chilled all farther hope, replied, "Ah, no Strathallan, it must not be."

“Strathallan!” he repeated, with a change of colour, and an emotion, which shewed that the pain her refusal gave him, was swallowed up in the pleasure, which hearing his name thus uttered, once again communicated to his heart.

“You remind me of my error, my Lord,” said Matilda, while self-reproach crimsoned her cheek, with a glow which passion would have vainly endeavoured to call up. “It must be my care to avoid it in future: you will not, I am sure, tax me with caprice, if I say that this evening, I am unequal to the exertions you did me the honor so much to praise; and that my spirits require solitude, or the presence of my own family, only till they can recover the tone in which but a short time ago you found them.”

Strathallan remained as if transfixed to the spot. “She is gone!” he exclaimed, “admirable creature! but she has left me her image, her example. Henceforth I shall learn to mistrust my own heart, and to think virtue’s mild radiance poured from Matilda’s eyes, a still safer guide, a more disinterested monitor.”

CHAP. II.

Nè men del vero
 L'apparenza d'un fallo
 Evitar noi dobbiam ; la gloria nostra
 E geloso cristal è debil canna,
 Ch'ogni aura inchina—ogni respiro appanna.

METASTASIO. ZENOBIO.

“ UPON my word it is too bad! Lady Strathallan should be informed of it—she really should?” Such was the decision of a discreet old lady, at a card party at Mrs. Stockwell’s, consisting of all the Bourgeois gentry of the town and neighbourhood, while the mistress of the house, affecting rather to pity, and defend the persons mentioned, than to blame them, artfully contrived to draw out the whole of the articles of accusation.

“ Why you know, Madam, Lord Strathallan is entirely engaged with them people at the Lodge; he is always there reading and singing, and talking and laughing, with that

Miss Melbourne, who is the most artfullest creature breathing ; sometimes he has been shooting, so he must lounge on the sofa all day to rest himself ; and sometimes he has not been shooting, and so he has the more time to spend with her, and his dear sister Emy ; oh such sisters ! for he makes her little runaway pranks, the pretext for his, and all to the neglect of his fine Lady wife."

" But are you sure it is quite so bad ?" said Mrs. Stockwell ; " Miss Melbourne was very coquettish, I'll grant you, and had such a way of drawing the gentlemen after her, I thought her rather a dangerous companion for my niece, when I had a niece ; and his Lordship was reckoned very gay, and resis-
tible ; but as to any thing approaching to such absolute turpentine, moral turpen-
tine ; excuse me, Madam, I can't believe it of them : to be sure he married Miss Moun-
tain, rather to please his father, and—"

" For my part," said old Mr. Spring, the hop-merchant, (father of the two hopeful youths we have so often mentioned,) " I think there is no love lost if he married

Miss Mountain for her fortune ; she married him for his title. If I had been my Lord Strathallan I would no more have taken a woman who—”

While this little dapper hero, was stretching himself, and deciding how he would have rejected her, with whom Strathallan had consented to share his title ; a young lady who professed to be better informed, as to the affairs of the great, reproved him for the injustice he did her. “ I assure you,” said she, “ I have been told, and I have reason to credit my information, that during their engagement, they were the fondest lovers, till he met with this deceitful Miss Mel bourne ; then he was so anxious to return to her when abroad, that he got leave to come home, they say, at a time, when he could not be well spared ; but he wrote to her ; ‘ my dearest,’ says he, ‘ let the old folks say what they will, (he meant Lord and Lady Torrendale, who were rather against the match) I shall be happy, so I can breathe my vows at your dear feet before a month be out.’ Well then he came to Woodlands, and there he

met that artful Miss Melbourne, who spared no pains to win his affections from her, and—'

"O Ma'am," said the old Lady, "tell the story of the hysterics and the picture."

"Ma'am I was going to—. Miss Melbourne never ceased keeping on, till she had got a promise of marriage from him; and some letters passed between them; and he gave her his picture; it was in a brooch, but it was not the less his picture for that; but after all, my Lord felt some little touch of compunction, and thought it was more honourable to marry Miss Mountain; and so when the ceremony was performing at my Lord Torrendale's, (I had it from an eye witness) in bounced Miss Melbourne, and said as he was her's, and produced the picture and letters; and upon the parson insisting on going on, went into strong hysterics."

"And then you know, my dear," said the discreet matron, concluding the story for her, "Miss Mountain, then Lady Strathallan, fell on her knees, and with tears entreated of her not to expose to the world, how her husband

hated her ; and so it was hushed up, on condition that Lady Strathallan, out of her large fortune should buy them Woodbine Lodge, as Mrs. Melbourne had taken a great fancy to, and settle it upon them for ever : and that Lady Emilia Fitzroy, should spend part of every year with them, under pretext of a visit, to do away the report of misunderstanding between the families."

" Why as to that," said Mrs. Stockwell with an oracular nod, for she loved to appear to act the part of moderator, " your story may be as it may ; but I do know as Lady Strathallan was very jealous of him, from the first moment he came down here, and for that reason would always accompany him, even in his visits to his brother at my house, for fear he should turn off to Clifden-down, which lay in the same road, and which was the place where them people lived then ; but afterwards when I heard the programme of the whole affair, I thought I must make my incantation, and that Lady Strathallan must have very little feeling ; by then, she could

bring herself to let her husband go amusing of himself in that sort of style without her."

" Feeling !" cried an over-dressed farmer's daughter, whose blooming cheeks and sparkling eyes belied the compassion affected in her voice ; " oh poor dear creature, she has only too much of it ; I know she is distracted about him ; but what can she do ? well I would not be a countess to be so treated, poor dear little soul, I know her well : at least, I know a friend of her's in town, whom she consults on every occasion, (this intimate friend being no other than Lady Strathallan's fancy dress-maker, was one with whom she indeed held frequent and confidential consultations) and Mrs. —hem—this lady, her particular friend, writes me word, the poor little creature has been distracted ever since she was married ; and does not know which way to turn herself with jealousy."

" Then she is such a poor mild soul," said a young man, who had not yet spoken ; " she knows not how to right herself : I may judge of her disposition as have known her

from a child ; I was her play-fellow, and was welcome to her father's any time when at Vinesbury."

The young gentleman did not think it necessary to mention the manner of his forming this noble acquaintance ; his having been in the habit of calling to pay the rent for his father, who was a rich tenant ; a circumstance which always made his visits particularly welcome to old Mr. Mountain : he had also, when younger, sometimes come with apples, or eggs, or chickens to the mansion, from the farm, and had been occasionally honoured by Miss Mountain, in her juvenile and romping days, by a game of play at Christmas, or an invitation to stand up in the dance. "I do not know," he continued, "what has hindered my calling since her marriage ; but I have such loads of business ; I hope she don't take it ill."

"Oh no," said Mrs. Stockwell, sentimentally, "that is the way friendship's finest fiddle strings will break, as they say : now who would have thought that Lady Torrendale and I, as was such friends, would grow so cold all of a sudden ; and to see her bounce

in and out, as she used to, when he was sick ; I only wants to see my son, then after sitting with him an hour, home again, without a word ; not but she behaved to me in the politest of manners," continued Mrs. Stockwell, retracting a little, for fear this representation might diminish her consequence in the eyes of the rest of the company ; " but it is not politeness, 'tis friendship I want. Now to think that woman used to come so free, and lie down on the sofa, and ask what was for dinner, if I was out, and stay and tumble all the things, not treating me stiff as if I was a stranger indeed, but with the kindest familiarity ; just as she would shew to any duchess. Oh dear to think how the world changes."

" But, Madam," said little Mr. Gros the attorney, " as I hear her Ladyship's son, Captain Fitzroy, is shortly to make part of your family ; I should think that would not only be the means of reconciling you to Lady Torrendale, but through her you might inform Lady Strathallan of what—"

• " If you mean by the marriage of my un-

grateful niece Arbella," said Mrs. Stockwell, drawing herself up with dignity; "You may depend upon't, Mr. Gros, you was misinformed. Captain Fitzroy will never, by that means, be allied to our family; Miss Ferrars, after refusing half the county, jilting 'squire Sowerby, Major O'Hará, and supereminently my son Sam, would be glad enough to snap at the Captain; but her name's up, and he won't have her; I think I know it from pretty good authority, for 'twas he told me so; and I believe, if there is a creature in the world, poor dear little Spencer has a love and confidence for, it is myself."

During this conversation, in which Miss Hautenville had taken no share beyond her favorite and dubious hem! hem! she had not, however, been an inattentive listener; crouched in a corner, every limb drawn up into an attitude of watchfulness; her long lean arms skewered to her sides; her eyes alone every now and then, expressed the envenomed delight of her heart; and as each character was, in turn, given up to slander, a suppressed laugh indicated her fiendish joy,

which seemed to exult over the ruin, and triumphantly to mutter, "Lost! lost! lost!"

While she thus indulged in her truly diabolical pleasure, and Mrs. Stockwell in the more innocent one, of believing herself the sole object of the love of Captain Spencer Fitzroy; Stephenson, the young farmer, who had spoke with such interest of Mountain, exclaimed, snapping his fingers with evident satisfaction, "I have it, the way she shall be informed of it is this, somebody may write an anomalous letter (I shan't say who) but I believe every one knows who is the best spoken Lady, and finest scribe in this good company; it may be signed by her unknown friend, as shall be nameless; and that will make her mistress of the whole transaction."

With this laudable resolution, which was much applauded, the whole of this scandalous and well-informed crew separated, resolved (at least as far as in them lay) that there should not long be peace between Miss Melbourne and Lady Strathallan.

Unsuspicious of these machinations, the in-

nocent Matilda had risen in unusual spirits, and was employed in her favorite amusement of painting, when she was surprised by a visit from the Viscountess; she requested to see her alone; and there was an uncommon affectation of ease and pleasure in her looks, and of airy gaiety in her appearance; she had a large sash tied behind, *a l'enfant*, and looked more immense and disagreeable than usual; a smile of assumed benignity sat on her lips, and her countenance glowed with more than its wonted enamelled brightness; yet there was something inauspicious in the whole, like the appearance of those red clouds in a sultry evening, which promise a stormy morning. Looking down (which Matilda's height rendered unnecessary) and smothering her little hand in both her own, "you seem pale, my dear," said she, with her usual affected condescension; "I hope you do not apply too intently to your work, or that the absence of those roses is not to be attributed to any more tender and latent cause." Observing that Matilda did not seem to take the application, "I am come," she continued, "my

little dear, to have some serious conversation with you. The honour of our sex is, you are aware, of that slight texture, that delicate substance, that at the least breath of censure it flies away, like a gossamer gauze, as it were, and you find it—a broken reed; now do not suppose that I care for the hum of the general voice, *auram popularem*; 'tis something, nothing, as Hamlet says, caviare to the multitude; the mere echo of their vain and foolish imaginations; the shadow of a shade. For imagination itself I take to be a very nothing—a vague thing—a vain thing—a mere matter of moonshine—you smile—'tis true I love to envelope my ideas in the gauze of metaphor, which sometimes renders them not tangible to ordinary capacities; but I trust, Miss Melbourne, you take my meaning."

" I confess I do not perfectly comprehend your Ladyship's intentions."

" I will endeavour to explain myself; remarks have been excited (not that they have reached any of the upper circles, but are merely confined to the most vulgar and ill-

informed) by the frequent visits made by Lord Strathallan, and his supposed preference to Woodbine Lodge: now do not imagine that they could make me uneasy; no, I am not vain, (surveying herself complaisantly in a pier glass) there are few women, indeed, who could excite my apprehension; and were it excited, it would not be by you, my little dear; but for your own sake, my love, as there was once a report of a tendre between you—”

“ I understand you now, Madam,” interrupted Matilda, with a look, in which surprise, indignation, and the noble candour of injured innocence were equally blended. “ I did not believe that malice itself could find food for employment in a destiny so obscure, a character so harmless and unpretending as mine; but you shall be satisfied at least of its injustice.”

She spoke these words with spirit; but overcome by the sense of the new and unforeseen ills which attacked her; ills against which she thought she had guarded by the strictest propriety, the most apprehensive de-

licacy in her own conduct, her voice soon failed, and her sinking courage dissolved into a shower of tears. "I am young," she continued, "and still ignorant, very ignorant of that world with which I have to contend. In the presence of my mother, of your amiable sister, and in that of my cousin Julia Melbourne, I little thought that an occasional visit, where every word that passed, your Ladyship might have said, would give rise to a calumny which has aimed at my peace, a blow, from which I feel it will never wholly recover. But the pretext, slight as it is, shall occur no more; be assured that Lord Strathallan shall never again, unaccompanied by your Ladyship, enter these doors."

"Nay, my dear soul, that is not what I mean," cried Lady Strathallan quickly, "such a sudden change would wholly defeat my intention, which is, to contradict the report—that I—that you—nobody can be so silly as to suppose me jealous," she continued, affecting to laugh; "I believe no woman has less reason, no woman receives more decided, more daily proofs of the constant, the devoted

attachment of the man she has honoured with her preference; yet still were it suspected, that by my interference his visits suddenly ceased, they would say, therefore—you understand me—my intention is only to hint to you, that you can, by gently breaking it off, prevent the world from talking; gradually let the habit decrease—let the chain be lengthened but—you remember the rest of the quotation."

"Lady Strathallan," said Matilda, firmly, "this is no time for half measures; if Lord Strathallan's attentions to me are not perfectly innocent, they are criminal; there is no medium—and since it is possible the world can look on them in the latter light, our intercourse is at an end."

"I had mistaken you, Miss Melbourne," said the Lady, rising in great perturbation, "I thought you had the good sense to have received my caution as it was meant; and to have joined with me in prudently smothering those reports, so derogatory to my dignity, my delicacy, the only circumstance of the whole which makes me uneasy; and now,

by your own imprudent violence, you will make a scene; and only confirm what was said before, with added and ridiculous imputations."

She walked about, and seemed in the highest irritation of spirits; but Matilda, who saw that this passion was as much assumed as her former benignity, and assumed with an intention to terrify her into acquiescence in her plans, remained firm, till her Ladyship thinking the storm had lasted long enough, thought proper, by degrees, to become appeased; and taking her hand, with a smile of apparent kindness, said, "You are a charming girl, and I believe I must take you on your own terms. Will you then suffer us to visit you together sometimes?" With this request Matilda readily complied; and the lady being so far satisfied, curiosity, the next prevailing passion took possession of her mind. "Will you tell me truly," she said, "if this renunciation does not cost you some pain? nay, don't fear to speak to me (smiling, and fixing those eyes on her, which always distressed by a look, confident to ex-

cess, and yet not absolutely bold) does not there still lurk about your heart a slight wish, a struggling hope."—

She repeated this searching address in a slow measured tone, which evinced she was more delighted with her own eloquence and penetration, than anxious about its effect on her hearer.

" I believe, Madam," replied Matilda, " I can answer your question;" and retiring for a moment, she returned with the pearl brooch she had received at Lady Torrendale's lottery, and which contained the picture of Strathallan, " this is the only memorial I possess," she said, " of him, who this morning has caused us such unpleasant discussion. Take it, Madam; chance made it mine; but a more sacred right confirms it yours—and may you find the attachment of the original as unchanged as it has been my wish that"—Here her voice again had nearly failed, but Lady Strathallan embracing her with transport, loaded her with eulogiums, while Matilda indulged upon her bosom in those tears, which to the virtuous is luxury to shed.

"A thought has occurred to me," said her Ladyship, carefully wiping her damask cheek; "to-morrow evening I go to a ball at Buxton, which I am worried to death to patronize; will you appear with me? nothing will so effectually put an end to any silly reports that may have gone abroad, to your disadvantage or mine."

Matilda, grateful to Lady Strathallan for this attentive care of her fair fame, joyfully promised compliance; and generous to excess herself, did not perceive that it was the same pride that dictated every thought, wish, and action of the Viscountess, which made her desire, for her own sake, that she, whom the public had given her as a rival, should appear to that public in the light of her friend. This consideration did not, however, render the circumstance itself less pleasant. On the following evening they were seen at the Buxton Ball; Lady Strathallan was adorned with all the elegance that fashion could bestow; but Matilda looked as if all the graces had presided at her toilet; and while, during the evening, they were observed engaged in

friendly conversation, or arm in arm with her lovely rival, the stately Viscountess swept the length of the ball-room, the scandalous chronicle and its abettors were totally disappointed of a month's expected food, in whispers, glances, and inuendoes ; and sincere and general satisfaction was experienced by all those, who feel for beauty, virtue, and innocence, the interest they ever desire to excite.

CHAP. III.

Che non si può su generoso cuore
Con generosi modi?

ALFIERI. ORESTE.

MATILDA, who, from an object of dislike, was become a sort of favorite with Lady Strathallan; received frequent invitations, (which she did not always refuse) to join the party at Woodlands. An innocent plan to turn the partiality of the Viscountess to the advantage of Strathallan, and thus in an indirect manner, contribute to his happiness, was the cause of this compliance. "Oh! could I be but the instrument to reconcile him to the choice my well-intended disinterestedness, in part, induced him to make," she exclaimed, "I should be repaid for all! —more than repaid." She endeavoured to

discover if Lady Strathallan had not some points of character in sympathy with that of her Lord, and thought she at length perceived that congeniality in a certain elevation of sentiment, which often broke forth from amidst the cloud of absurdity, and romantic affectation with which it was surrounded, and a disinterestedness, amounting almost to a contempt of money, which she not only professed, but acted up to, on every occasion. She was not destitute of greatness of mind, if she had not been too conscious of the possession of that advantage. Her's was not, indeed, that unaffected and almost unconscious heroism which springs from the heart, and may be termed, the sublime of tenderness. She was not an Arria, to draw forth the dagger and cry "Pœtus, it is not painful;" but she was fully equal to the answer of Lewis the Fourteenth's consort, when questioned if her heart had ever entertained a former preference, "*Il n'y avait point de roi à la cour de mon père.*" "Sydney's sister, Pembroke's mother," she would have deemed far inferior titles to that of the wife of the matchless

Strathallan. Was it hard with a woman of such dispositions to suggest the means of deserving him? Still referring to Strathallan's wishes, Matilda gradually led her, not contented with being the promoter of the ball, or the patroness of a play, to stand forth the encourager of every thing that had the happiness or advantage of those within the sphere of her influence, for its object.

Such conduct could not fail of producing its effect upon a heart like Strathallan's; and as Matilda had foreseen, the attractions of one common interest, drew closer the bands of union between him and his lady; her name was united with that of Lady Strathallan, and repeated with blessings wherever it was heard; while that of Lady Torrendale was scarcely remembered, or remembered only to be marked by an expression of indifference or disapprobation.

One evening as, arm in arm, the ladies strolled out upon a ramble, which was much too long for the delicacy of the Countess, but which Strathallan promised his wife and Miss Melbourne, would reward, by the grandeur

of an uncommonly beautiful prospect, their deviation from the usual route, they struck into a shady lane, which led to a row of buildings that was appropriated for the reception of the aged poor of the village ; and that had lately received, from the bounty of Lady Strathallan, many additional conveniences.

One of its rustic inhabitants had ventured out to taste the freshness of the evening. He leant upon a staff for support, and was, in all respects, like Crabbe's description of the Aged Villager ; but, oh, how unlike him in his fate ; he had found an asylum where his wants and infirmities were relieved, and where even the comforts and indulgences he could still enjoy, were not neglected. He drew back respectfully to make way for the ladies, but on perceiving who they were, the mechanical reverence that only marks the difference of station, at once gave way to the much more pleasing tribute to the heart. Fixing his eyes on them, as if the sight was a cordial to his faint and exhausted spirits ; "Bless you both !" he fervently ex-

claimed, while tears of gratitude ran down his furrowed cheek, “and heaven *will* surely bless you ! for you are young and great, and yet you remember the destitute !”

Even Lady Strathallan appeared affected.—Matilda gave her a sweet expressive look, which seemed to say, “ Is not this worth all the triumphs of vanity ?” While Strathallan, indulging in the effusions of a manly, graceful tenderness, beheld them with admiration almost arising to enthusiasm, and “smiled with superior love.” “Be ever thus united,” he said, “and praise, and adoration *will* follow wherever you turn.”

It was in moments like these, he felt his heart was not wholly without employment : that expansiveness of mind prevented it from shrinking into itself, however deprived, by circumstances, of the exercise of its most grateful feelings. Passion was, with him, only a centre from which every other amiable affection diverged with different but proportioned force ; and it was not hard to trace them up to their source, from the first generous sigh for the happiness of mankind,

to the stronger and more determined impulses of pity—generosity—benevolence—tenderness—love. He found the compensation for that painful blessing, a feeling heart, in the happiness it still enabled him to taste. The ~~rose~~ of life, indeed, was withered ; but its perfume was not gone. That he acknowledged Matilda as the author even of this imperfect satisfaction, she could not deny ; but she no longer dreaded his gratitude, should either distress or offend her ; it was a gratitude which ever feared to wound, by appearing too impassioned, the delicacy and generosity that at first excited it.

While such was the conduct of Miss Melbourne, Lady Torrendale appeared as if anxious to detach Strathallan from his bride, by employing all her little power of ridicule, in pointing out her absurdities, and exaggerating her follies ; yet even that wayward temper was gradually weaned by Matilda, from this gratuitous love of giving pain. She represented to the Countess so strongly, that it was her interest to keep well with her daughter-in-law, who was making rapid ad-

vances in the favour of Lord Torrendale, that her Ladyship was induced to treat Lady Strathallan, in general, with outward attention, if not with real kindness. The Earl suddenly found his house a more agreeable residence, without being able exactly to determine to what he should attribute the change. It was impossible, however, for him long to continue blind to the influence of that angel of gentleness, who had breathed into it the spirit of harmony, and love, and joy. All his former injustice arose to his mind with added pangs of self-reproach. As the circumstances relating to his son's past attachment to Matilda had never been discussed between him and Mrs. Melbourne, it might have been supposed easier for him to slide again into that friendly unaffected behaviour, which he had formerly maintained towards her daughter. But that generosity of disposition, which he concealed under the habitual reserve of his manners, and the dignity of his age and station, rendered him unhappy, while conscious of an injustice he had not acknowledged; and an accidental

interview of a few moments, that he had alone, with this amiable girl, put to flight all the resolutions he had often formed, of preserving an inviolable and prudent silence. Observing, that her presence had now again become rare at Woodlands, he entreated she would appear oftener in a scene, which was always so much improved by her presence. Matilda surprised at this alteration of manner, excused herself with a blush, saying; “That her domestic occupations did not allow her so much time, as formerly, to spend with her friends, and share their pleasures.”

“Say, rather, their happiness!” interrupted Lord Torrendale, with emotion; “and surely none have so great a right to witness happiness, as those who are themselves the authors of it. Miss Melbourne, I did, I own, think Strathallan influenced—violent—absurd—but were he free, and had he to chuse out of a thousand women, his choice could not be fixed more worthily than—but it was impossible;” he continued, “you have, yourself, too much penetration, too much native delicacy, not to perceive, how

impossible it is for us to follow the dictates of inclination, and fulfil all the obligations imposed on us." Then, as if fearful of having said too much, and resuming all his wonted dignity and self-importance, his Lordship concluded ; " All I meant to say, Miss Melbourne, was, that I think I owe you, in common with my whole family, an acknowledgment for the uniform dignity, propriety, and decorum of your conduct, in a trying, (I will allow it), a very trying situation." With his usual, perhaps more than his usual formality, he took leave ; but the first effusion of a feeling heart had been expressed, it could not be recalled ; and Matilda saw in it a tribute the most grateful, to the difficulty and the merit of the distressing conflicts she had had with herself.

Thus surrounded by those she had contributed to bless, loaded with daily and most flattering marks of the esteem of every individual of that family, with which she had voluntarily declined a closer connexion, was it possible for the sophistry of passion itself to persuade her, that in becoming a part of

that family against their interest and wishes, making use of her influence over her lover's heart, to make him disappoint, instead of fulfilling the object of his father's life, and involving his name and her's in one common censure, she could have hoped to taste a purer satisfaction than that; which now descended to gild the serene tenor of her days, and minister a tempered joy to her subdued and chastened spirit.



CHAP. IV.

Let not that devil which undoes your sex,
That cursed curiosity, seduce you
To hunt for needless secrets.

ROWE'S JANE SHORE.

“ UPON my word,” said Arbella, to Matilda, “ I think our different stories might make the subject of a pretty moral dissertation entitled, ‘ Advantages of Circumspection, or Dangers of Coquetry.’ Here have you, after the most distressing reverse of fortune, transformed into an admirer, the relation whom at first you feared to meet! converted into the warmest friend, the man you refused, (for you will not deny that you refused Sowerby), and obtained the friendship and esteem, even of your rival, in the most difficult and trying circumstance of your life. While I, with as flattering pros-

pects as ever opened to the vanity of woman ; after thinking I had my choice of three, each in their way, let me tell you, valuable admirers, may as well, I think, go and make my best curtsey to my cousin Sam, and beg of him to forget the past, and take me for pity ; for I really begin to believe, after all, that Spencer won't have me. Well, we must confess, in the manner you have conducted every thing, you have been extremely fortunate."

" Do you not recollect the correction made to that title by the lucky Saladin, in the Turkish Tale ? "

" Saladin the Prudent ? well then, if you will not allow luck to have any share in it, you are assuredly more prudent than I am ; or, as a certain great legal character was said to have replied, when some one observed to him, he had been through life a most fortunate man, ' you might say, with much more truth, I have been a most laborious man,' and laborious it would certainly be, to shew ones-self, on all occasions, so very good as you are."

"I do not find it so ; I leave to you entirely the support of a much more laborious character, and yet one from which you own, yourself, you have as yet derived neither pleasure, nor advantage."

"Why no, you are not a professed coquette as I am ; but you have greater success in your own quiet way, and must, therefore, have greater art."

"I have no art ; I resign to you all the honours of the science."

"What does that signify," resumed Arabella, with a playful petulance, that was becoming in her, and in her alone ; "while the deuce of it is, that if I have most science, as the musicians say, you have most execution. Then what a miracle have you performed for your faultless lord—behold his huntress bride,

"That bouncing Amazon,
His buskin'd mistress, and his warrior love."

has given up (I beg pardon) *almost* given up, 'Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart,' for the pleasures of reading, friendship, and the con-

versation of the beloved Strathallan. Is it that; or is it the terrible fall she got that reformed her? By the bye, before we say a word more on any other subject, I must communicate to you a discovery I have made, respecting a subject I once before mentioned to you, that will, perhaps, surprise you. We will allow a great deal for the exaggeration of common report; yet still I must say I did think, if he had a preference—however, I find we were all mistaken, and that he has found consolation quite independently of you."

"How, what do you mean?" enquired Matilda, much disturbed.

"There is a certain fair lady, whom he brought with him from abroad, who is the real object of all his attentions, and in whose company he forgets—"

"Impossible! Miss Ferrars," said Matilda; her mild eyes flashing for the first time with indignation, "Lord Strathallan is incapable of so unprincipled a conduct; the rules of honour alone—"

"Lord Strathallan! good heavens, my

dear, where had your thoughts wandered. I was speaking all along, you know, of your crazy cousin—you will excuse me for thus mentioning your relation. I will tell you the first cause of my suspicion," continued Arbella, sparing her friend the confusion of an apology. "When we were in the library, looking at some of the marbles which he had removed there for ornament, my ears were suddenly struck with the sound of a harp, the sweetest music I ever heard—you smile; now you are going to say it was some of the musicians practising; or as George Spring says, practising; no such thing—it was from that side of the house where the musicians never went; that part which only contains the rooms appropriated in your—in former times to a museum, and conservatory, and so on; and which, since Sir Harold has taken possession, have never been opened to view. I said, 'Sir Harold, I believe you have got an invisible lady in those forbidden apartments; I declare I have heard sweeter sounds than ever proceeded from the little crystal cage of the real one,' he looked a me—Oh, my dear! I shall not attempt to

describe his look—then saying there was nothing farther worth detaining us in the library, he hurried us out of it. I afterwards questioned the servants if my suspicions were not just, but could get no satisfaction."

" You could not!" said Matilda, with a smile of pretended surprise, " amazing."

" No, indeed. Lady Torrendale said it was wrong to ask, but I think I did well, for how is one to learn any thing but by asking questions? and at last, I did get some satisfaction—the housekeeper told me, under the seal of secrecy; but I entrust it to you; that it was true her master had brought over a beautiful young lady from Italy, whom he was distractedly in love with, and very desirous to marry. He had been instrumental in delivering her from the imprisonment of a convent, where her friends had placed her, with the intention that she should take the veil: this had thrown her into his power, and instead of restoring her, as she had expected and conditioned, to a relation who would have received her till she could make terms with her other connexions, he had forcibly

conveyed her away to England, and then endeavoured to persuade her she had no other alternative but becoming his wife. The difference of religion, however, and the want of her parents consent, formed an insuperable bar, in her opinion ; and she did nothing but weep and sigh during the daily visits of Sir Harold, who, though he kept her under close confinement, studied every thing that could make that confinement agreeable to her ; and her constant resistance was the cause of that unhappiness, and those occasional starts of fury, which may be observed in your cousin. You may suppose, my dear," pursued Arbella, " I was anxious to see the sweet creature after this account ; but the housekeeper, a very discreet woman, told me it was impossible for her to procure me that gratification ; and begged I would rest satisfied with the information she had given me ; but I am determined it shall not be long before I, in some manner or other, indulge my wish."

Matilda now called to mind a former idle report about Sir Harold, which did not disagree with this statement ; still, as she thought

the whole story extremely improbable, and most likely, related by the woman to amuse the curiosity of Arbella, she used her utmost endeavours to dissuade her from her wild intention ; but Arbella's was not a mind to be so easily governed ; whenever a subject interested her, she was apt, as the French term it, *à se passionner*, and a singular peculiarity in her character was, that these *passions* were sometimes taken, for objects, that should have been the most absolutely indifferent to her, whilst she manifested a coldness, amounting almost to insensibility ; for many that might be supposed to touch her much more nearly ; the beautiful Italian nun, " who could not speak English, poor dear soul, and had no friend in England to right her," became the subject of her nightly dreams and daily cogitations. She raved of nothing else to Matilda, who, considering the whole as a fable, was rather weary of her constant sighs, tears, and plaints, on the subject. She soon had reason to repent having indulged her curiosity.

About half a mile beyond the Rocks there

was the ruins of an ancient priory, which had also once belonged to the Melbourne family. One fine evening that the Melbournes spent at Woodlands, Lady Torrendale observing there were many young people in company, proposed an excursion to it. The carriages were ordered, in which they were to proceed as far as the Rocks, where they intended to alight and walk to the Priory. Returning from their ramble, the Countess, who had not forgot her old *penchant* for flirting with and “surprising” the Baronet, proposed they should look in upon the “hermit Sir Harold,” and carry him off *vi et armis* to sup with his relations at Woodlands. Miss Ferrars, delighted with the idea, led the way. She was just then relating the history of the Italian nun to Miss Sagely, a stony damsel of the neighbourhood, who always thought Arbella “odd,” and congratulating herself on her superior wisdom, because, too dull to commit the errors of vivacity, imagined she must indubitably be right, as she made it a rule on all occasions to say nothing and do nothing: her statue-like calmness, and the

difficulty with which she at length brought out a "really ma'am;" or "very singular indeed," formed the best contrast with the varying countenance, and eyes of trembling lustre, with which Arbella related the improbable and romantic tale; but when she came within sight of the gothic door which led to the (supposed) uninhabited wing of the mansion, her transport knew no bounds. "Look Madam," she exclaimed to Lady Torrendale, "'tis open—left open by chance—I will see her once before she dies!"

"Not for your life, Arbella," cried Matilda, stepping forward and seizing her arm.

"Miss Ferrars, have you forgot all propriety?" cried Lady Torrendale.

"Propriety Madam," said Arbella, "when sensibility, when justice is in the cause!" she darted forward, passed the broken arch, which was overhung with moss and ivy, and was out of sight in a moment.

"Dear heart! she is a spirited young lady," cried George Spring, jumping for joy, "Gad I'd like to have a peep myself."

Lady Torrendale followed, under pretence

of wishing to overtake and prevent Arbella, and Miss Sagely looking at her mother, they exchanged glances of mutual regret at the indecorum of her young companion ; while they perhaps secretly exulted in the eccentricities of one often superior to them, and were not sorry to find themselves, by a lucky chance, thus in at the death—of her discretion. Crossing a large and empty hall, they entered a room into which Arbella had already penetrated ; but, as if struck motionless at the scene that presented itself, she no longer offered to lead on her companions :—she stood with clasped hands, and a countenance in which horror was deeply painted, exclaiming, “ That Sir Harold was addressing a spirit.” The sun, which was just setting, shed, from its parting rays, a gloomy richness over the large and magnificent apartment. The crimson curtains of a huge gothic window were partly drawn, and discovered Sir Harold in an attitude of fervent supplication, addressing a figure, which, though partly shrouded in the gloom, yet, from the aerial transparency of that part of the outline which was

visible, and the fleecy whiteness of the vestments that enfolded it, might well pass for an inhabitant of the other world. A single beam, that darted through the dim pane, fell on Sir Harold's countenance, and discovered it to be more pale and haggard than usual; his lips moved with earnestness; and the few words that could be caught of what fell from him, appeared those of invocation; but the silence of the mysterious being he addressed was not to be moved. Yet she bent over him, in an attitude of Madona tenderness. Those features, though wasted almost to spiritual transparency, could still boast the line of beauty; but the pale, wan tint with which they were overcast, their fixed, wax-like regularity, had something that appalled the mind, as being too lovely to belong to death's dominion, yet no longer varying or animated by the breath of life. Lady Torrendale, the moment the figure met her view, uttered a piercing shriek, and fell senseless to the ground—it was some moments before she could be recovered, and, when she was, she continued to exclaim, in a piercing ac-

cent, “She calls me, she calls me, I shall not long survive her—take, take me from this chamber of horrors.” She repeated these words so unceasingly, and with such vehemence, that, fearful of her being attacked with hysterics, her female friends hastened to have her conveyed back into the air—but Sir Harold, turning with solemn earnestness to Mrs. and Miss Melbourne, and laying a hand on each, said, “You do not go.” Arbella, terrified, shocked, and ashamed of what she had done, still lingered in a kind of irresolute curiosity; and the same motive tempted those who could be spared from Lady Torrendale, to prolong their unwelcome intrusion. The presence of so many strangers produced a visible effect upon the fair incomprehensible being, whose sanctuary they had invaded. Advancing towards them with a courteous but hurried accent, “I thank you good ladies,” she cried; “Thank you, thank you, good ladies and gentlemen—you are come to rescue me, but this is not the hour! The clock has scarce struck seven—one, two, three, four, five,” she reckoned over the

numbers with inconceivable rapidity, “ five hours of liberty still remain. At twelve I shall require your assistance.” And, with a sweet earnestness, and in the attitude and tone of a Belvidera, she repeated, “ remember twelve.” A smile of angel brightness for a moment illuminated her faded features ; but the eyes that should have spoken the language of the soul, vacant and wandering, shewed that the nobler faculties, which distinguish and exalt the intellectual nature, informed no more their lovely mansion.

Sir Harold, who had appeared extremely disturbed during the whole of this address, which he had been unable to prevent, now turned to the intruders with added fierceness, “ away, away, officious meddling beings,” he cried, “ do you not fear to break in upon the sacredness of a solitude like this?” But his endeavours were rendered ineffectual by the emotion of the lovely sufferer, who, on observing his menacing tone and gesture, clung terrified to his arm, exclaiming, in a plaintive accent, “ Oh Harold, oh my son, not, not again for me ; remember I have none

now left but you, my Harold—let no more blood be shed—let not—”

“ Heavens! Lady Julia Melbourne, has she not been dead some years ago,” exclaimed several voices at once. “ Lady Julia Melbourne—is it possible?”

“ Yes, it is possible,” cried Sir Harold, with a sternness, and in a tone that thrilled every heart with horror. “ You have at length torn from me my secret, discovered the wreck of all that was great and lovely. That wreck which I would have mourned in secret. This is Lady Julia Melbourne. This is my only parent, she, who, snatched from the gay thoughtless scene which she adorned, was regretted a moment, pitied, and forgotten; but she did not die. The cruelty which destroyed her nobler part, sanctioned that falsehood too. At this moment the most violent agitation seized Lady Julia. “ They are come to take me,” she cried, “ they will again hide me from you—do not, do not again leave me to the mercy of my enemies.”

“ Fear it not,” cried Sir Harold, kneeling

and pressing, in filial anguish, the hand he held, while grief and anxiety at the sight of her sufferings, seemed to suspend in his soul every other feeling."

This was then the true secret of the unhappy Baronet, who had, a moment before, been considered as a tyrant, a merciless oppressor of beauty and innocence.—An awful pause succeeded, which was only interrupted by the shrieks of Lady Torrendale, distinctly heard at intervals; for she had fallen into strong hysterics, and could not, for the present, be removed home. One fit succeeded another, and she only recovered to repeat, with incessant violence, "I have seen her—she has returned to the world—I have seen the spirit of Julia!"

Mrs. Melbourne, who knew the Countess to be of a disposition which was seldom affected by any circumstance that did not immediately concern herself, but who also knew her to be particularly liable to the attacks of superstition, was, from motives of humanity, most anxious that she should be removed, as soon as possible, from a scene

so painfully irritating to her feelings. Upon the first symptoms of returning composure she had her carriage ordered round, and Lady Torrendale was lifted into it, being still unable to support herself. Arbella was preparing to accompany her, and the rest, who had expected the evening to close so differently, to return, much discomfited, to their separate homes, when Sir Harold, turning to his fair relations, said, with an air, tranquil and composed, even to a degree of melancholy dignity, “ To those who could, (from whatever motive,) wantonly intrude upon the sacred source of all my sorrows, I have no desire to appeal, or to justify myself—No, let them triumph in having accomplished their purpose—In having deprived me of the sad privilege of being a wretch in secret! I asked no human being to share my sorrows. I invited them to the sound of the dance and song; and strewed with flowers the grave beneath my feet: but they were not satisfied. To you, my lovely cousins, who, led by some motive of angel pity, and benevolence, to restrain others, not indulge yourselves,

find yourselves thus unexpectedly in this melancholy scene, shall all the past be opened. It is fair you should be satisfied, that he who has shared so much of your friendly care and kindness, is neither a demon of cruelty nor a monster of caprice and injustice."

"I am ready, my dear sir," said Mrs. Melbourne, with a melancholy firmness, while she could scarcely restrain a glance of indignation at those around her, "to hear any secret of which you may wish to unburthen your mind, though persuaded, you can have none, which can lessen you in my esteem."

As she spoke, she led the way into another apartment; but Sir Harold, forcing her to be reseated, exclaimed, "No, no, here, and only here, can I relate my tale of woe. The scene that daily witnesses the effects of too late repented cruelty, is alone fitted to hear the progress of that cruelty revealed."

Matilda looked timidly around her; her spirits already exhausted by repeated sufferings, could not boast the steady equanimity

of her mother's, and a heavy convulsive sigh spoke her shuddering alarm.

"Happy girl!" whispered Arbella, as unwilling, and dying with curiosity, she slowly retreated towards the door.

"Happy!" Matilda repeated, looking up, with an accent that thrilled her friend with horror.

"Why then, miserable—I know not whether most to envy or deplore you; Heaven send you safe out of the Blue Chamber," replied her friend, shuddering in her turn. Amen, seemed to be expressed in the countenances of the other visitants, as, casting a hasty glance of pity on the mother and daughter, they closed, with as much precipitation as possible, the vast and creaking door. The sullen sound it returned, the every moment increasing gloom of the apartment, struck Matilda to the heart; but in her mother, solicitude to obtain an explanation of the late extraordinary events, had swallowed up alarm, and even for the moment, the expression of regret and pity. The

fair sufferer had retired into an inner chamber; and Sir Harold, seating his cousins on a sofa, and affectionately taking a hand of each, prepared to unfold to them the clue to his singular and mournful destiny; while they listened in mute attention, as he, for the first time, displayed to them the darkest page in the eventful history of the family of Melbourne.

CHAP. V.

O speak no more, my heart flames in its heste,
I once was *Ælla*—now am not his shade;
Had all the fury of misfortune's will,
Fallen on my baned head, I had been *Ælla* still;
This alene was unblurred of all my spryte,
My honour, honour frowned on the dulce wind
That stealed on it.—

CHATTERTON—*ÆLLA*.

HISTORY OF SIR HAROLD MELBOURNE.

“ **M**Y father, Sir Reginald Melbourne, had virtues; but they were of a cast so gloomy and severe, that even where his character raised esteem, it failed to excite love; and the first impression I recollect receiving from him, was that of fear. My mother, (Oh! how does fancy bleed upon recalling her sweet excellence,) joined to the most enchanting form, each nobler quality of heart and mind. We were one—I loved her with

a tenderness, a *companionship* of affection, far beyond what is usually felt, in a relation such as ours. I seemed to her, born to enable her to bear the load of domestic tyranny; a tyranny which, while it rendered her home insupportable, made her appear to an ill-judging world, given up to its pleasures—they called her gay, unthinking—I knew her heart; 'twas all softness; 'twas what I fear Julia's will be; and while I witnessed the tears she often shed in private, could feel how much she was formed for a different scene. To me was unveiled the elegance of her mind, the sensibility of her heart. She delighted to form my youth to something beyond the general routine of public studies; and the similarity of our tastes, a resemblance to her, that was said to exist in the manners and way of thinking of her dearest blessing, as she often fondly called me, served more strongly to cement our union. The first long separation I endured from her, was when I left my paternal mansion for the University. The tears she shed at parting were prophetic; my grief I carefully concealed, that her's

might not be increased by beholding it.—“Who will now screen me from severities,” she said, “that I am ill able to endure. Who will now be my solace, when, with a mind bowed down by domestic anguish, I seek in society for relief in vain!”

“Her attention was not, indeed, wholly undivided. My sister Julia, now just emerging from infancy into childhood, shared her cares; but the confidence, the feelings that conceived and doubly suffered for her sorrows, could not exist between them. I spent the period of my exile in my allotted studies, which afforded me, at least, at times, a compensation for the privations I endured, till—I hardly dare to recollect the day, a fellow student—no, I will not call him so, a wretch, a coward, ventured in public, to utter some expressions that reflected upon the fair fame of her who commanded all my reverence and affection. I scarcely remember the words that afterwards passed between us; I only know I called him to an explanation, and he insultingly replied, that what he said, alluded to a circumstance too well known to

need from him a particular apology. I insisted upon one, or to be satisfied with the blood of his dastard heart. We fought—he fell. I cannot paint my horror at the moment; I felt not that I too was wounded. The wound was in my head, and rendered me incapable of attending to my own safety: the first thing I remember was the consciousness that my own life was endangered by having sacrificed his. I know not whether it was the goodness of my cause, and the provocation I had received, or the ability of my legal defenders, but by the laws of my country I was acquitted. Not so by my father, who reproached me for making more public what he confirmed as true—*HER* error. But I charge you, my cousin," continued Sir Harold, his eyes lighted up with sudden fury, "believe it not—no, though you bright star, that in its listening silence starts and trembles as I relate, were to descend from its orbit and attest it true; believe it not, *she* could not err. Some vile jealousy deceived him; still, considerate for his daughter's sake, he said, he would not farther divulge her

disgrace, but banish her to some distant country, where the public might be deceived by a report she had gone in search of health. Agonized by this intelligence, I forsook my studies, I forsook every thing, and hastened to Moss-cliff Abbey, to take a last long adieu of a parent so beloved—rather, perhaps, to offer to accompany her in her exile, preferring sorrow and obscurity with her, to all the bright prospects I left behind. But I came too late. I was told she had set out upon her pilgrimage of woe, and when I declared my resolution to seek and console her, my father opposed himself in the strongest manner to what he considered as a rebellion against him; a shameful dereliction from the precepts that should be cherished by his only son, and he would not inform me what route she had taken.

“ Distracting as must have been the events that led to this catastrophe, I yet felt surprised and pained that she had not, by a few brief lines, informed me where I might seek her out. Enraged, however, at what I deemed in my father the height of injustice,

I departed, without any other clue to guide me than what my own memory and probable conjectures afforded. I knew she had relations, who had educated her, at Florence, and an uncle who had a *chateau*, in the south of France; to one of these places she might have been spirited away by the same power that had forced her from her home.

“ After taking the necessary precautions for my personal safety, precautions that I took more for her sake than my own, I traversed countries convulsed with the flames of war—their distracted state assimilated to the tortures of my mind. I passed through every scene unharmed, for I had a stronger safeguard than that of authority. Who would injure a son in pursuit of his lost parent? I visited courts, saw churches, palaces, theatres—”

“ And did not that variety of objects afford your mind relief,” Matilda, in a tone of compassion, enquired.

“ No,” replied her cousin, “ for about that time spirits began to torment me, and allowed me no repose. Sometimes, at a

crowded assembly, they would come up and whisper me that ~~she~~ was just passing through another part of the city, and then I hurried to the place, but found her not. Another time at the theatre, when gazing on a beautiful young lady, they told me not to think of such a bride, for she would ask to be conducted to her mother, and I had none to lead her to. Then would I quit in haste the brilliant scene, which offered to my view, happiness I must never hope to enjoy.

“ Again, from court or from some country palace these spirits would hurry me away, and bid me seek her among the tombs, yet was she not there. In spite of their persecutions I had contrived to visit every scene where it was possible she might be found ; had visited Sicily, Cadiz, Lisbon. My recollection, which began to grow confused and dim, though my heart was ever the same, sometimes presented the reason my father gave the world for her absence, as a reality, and I sought her wherever health was to be found, with renewed ardour, and hope of success.

" In the midst of this new pursuit, a letter arrived from my father, abruptly acquainting me with my mother's death, but without indicating the spot where her pale remains were deposited. Yet this, by the few faint lights I possessed, I resolved to discover, when a second letter, in a different hand, was delivered to me, urging my speedy return to England, if I wished to receive the last commands of my father, who was not expected to live. Though I travelled with incredible speed, and did not a moment defer my embarkation, I had been too late had I landed one day beyond that in which I hailed my native shore.

" I found my father fully conscious of his situation; the sternness and gloom of his nature struggled with the weakness of death. ' I have a secret to confide,' he said, ' which is for your ear alone.' After dismissing his attendants, he took from his pillow two massy keys, and delivering them to me, ' These,' he continued, ' constitute you the guardian of a prisoner, who must fall to your care. To my family and the world she has been

dead above two years, but I dreaded your greater penetration, and therefore banished you for a time, till weary of your protracted stay, I announced her death also to you. In both these accounts I deceived my son, as well as the world, by a false report. She who dishonoured the name of Melbourne is not suffered to enjoy its pleasures at a distance from me, and to revel with impunity on the fortune which she does not deserve to possess. The west wing of this ancient building has been her prison. In the wilds of Northumberland I was secure from prying curiosity and intrusion, and by changing all the servants at the time of her confinement, and well-securing, by the power of interest, the fidelity of the one who was entrusted with the secret, and attended upon her, I knew how to baffle even the anxiety of filial partiality like yours. It is now in your power to set her free. Perhaps, exulting in the possession of your newly acquired rights, happy with your favorite parent, you will rejoice over the extinction of that which you will, no doubt, term an unjust and barbarous

tyranny, and restore to light those graces which were your pride, while on your house they brought shame, reproach, and ruin. But if you listen to the counsel a dying father gives, trust not the first emotions of your heart; be firm, as I have been, and yield not uncontrolled freedom to a spirit that will abuse it, to bring on you accumulated repen-tance.'

" I cannot express to you, my amiable friends, the mixture of my feelings at this discourse. Joy that my mother yet lived; surprise and pity at the cruel and long im-prisonment she had endured, combined, with compassion for my father's situation, and horror at his latest counsel, agitated my mind with an overwhelming contrariety of emotions, such as I had never before expe-rienced. I forbore to reproach him, but scarcely had I waited to close his eyes, when I hastened to the western wing of Moss-cliff Abbey, to the prison-house of my mother; enraptured with the idea of being the means of releasing that dear parent, of restoring her to life, to liberty, and happiness, I deter-

mined to offer my fortune to her disposal, and promise to devote my future life to make her amends for her past sufferings. For an instant I felt nothing but delight, wild, pure, unmixed. No—all I have felt since has not obliterated the remembrance of that scene.

" When the massy doors, which kept her from me, gave way, I once more found myself at her feet, and in a transport of filial tenderness, told her she was free! Delicious moment! succeeded by sufferings so long and bitter. She looked at me, but knew me not for her deliverer. The pressure of misfortune had sunk too deep on a mind too finely formed, and reason had given way under the ills she had endured. She thanked me, but as a stranger, told me she had no wish to depart; that had she experienced such, she had no obstacle to prevent her, for she had always been at liberty. Sweet sufferer! the spacious apartments she occupied, and the gloomy and sullen gardens annexed to them, had long been the world to her. I endeavoured to recal to her remembrance a son who had loved her with such devoted

attachment, and who had long sought her, with anguish, through the world, in vain ; and tried, with every soothing art, to lead her to enjoy the present, and to make her sensible of the difference of her situation. My efforts were fruitless, and I found that any attempt to remove her from her present abode, excited in her the most painful emotions. When I urged it, she mistook me for my father; thought herself at liberty where she was, but that he was coming, with his former violence, to force her into confinement.

“ Obliged to leave her, for the present, under this impression, I withdrew from a sight, which tore my heart, and passed the greater part of the night in an anxiety and perturbation little inferior to that with which I had seen her agitated. Being determined not to place myself far from her, I had a bed made in the apartment adjoining to hers, and had at length sunk to a disturbed and uneasy repose, when, in the middle of the night, I was awakened by the most plaintive and heart-piercing cries; they evidently proceeded from my mother’s apartment. I hastily rose

to her assistance, but was encountered in the passage by the woman who guarded her. ‘ It is nothing Sir,’ said she, ‘ but my Lady’s usual way. Every night at twelve she thinks old Sir Reginald and a band of men are come to take her back to prison—because it was at that hour that he laid wait for her at the eastern gate, and had her carried to these apartments, when she had appointed to meet Lord—’

“ I stopped her audacious discourse, and hastening to the dear mourner, with assurances of safety, staid with her till I had soothed her into repose. But these terrors, nightly repeated, while no gleam of reason seemed to repay my efforts, were near reducing me to a state like her own. In such distraction of mind, I know not how I was able to attend to the multitude of affairs that pressed upon me in consequence of my father’s death, or the care of the estates that devolved upon me. I shut myself up almost entirely with her, and the only gleam of consolation I remember feeling, was upon observing nothing had been neglected in her

mournful prison, that could contribute to her convenience and health; and the assurance from the mercenary who attended her, that Sir Reginald had always been ready to grant her any indulgence she might request within its precincts, so that the pangs of inward regret, had not been aided by any outward severity, to bring her to the state I deplored. To disclose that state to the world I still felt myself unequal. In this one caprice I indulged. Her once numerous acquaintance believed her dead. I let them believe so still. I suffered them to attribute my voluntary seclusion, and my almost constant residence in one wing of my gloomy paternal mansion, to what singularity they chose, rather than allow the hard-hearted, and the fool, to rejoice at the overthrow of grace, talent, mind, like hers. At midnight she always required my presence to guard her from her returning terrors. One night—Oh! how deeply engraven on my memory is that moment. After I thought I had soothed her into something of repose, she looked at me earnestly, and her eyes suddenly beaming

with that intelligence, which in former times rendered them so beautiful, 'I believe,' she said, (she spoke with sweet hesitation) 'I need no longer fear—you are, you are my son !'

" Matilda, you, a few like you, can feel how well the transport of this recognition repayed whatever I had suffered. To hear her thank me; to see her grateful smile in acknowledgement of all my efforts for her relief; to tell her all I had endured; to mark her kindling eye that felt and understood all I related, and hear her once more call me her son, her Harold, returned from a distant world to defend and protect her! but I had more to suffer. From the moment that she knew me, I formed hopes of her complete recovery; they were too sanguine. Nothing could persuade her of Sir Reginald's death, or that she had leave to venture beyond the mansion. I, however, persuaded her to visit those parts of it which she had formerly inhabited; and thus enlarged the sphere of her enjoyments, while I restricted my own power of receiving society. To

general society I was indeed every day becoming more indifferent, or to speak truly, I felt at the idea of it, a growing fear and disgust. The mournful events that had taken place in my family I thought I saw written on every countenance. My father's cruelty—my fatal duel—and (what they would impiously call) my mother's—frailty. It was not for me, whose fate renewed the tale of stern Thebes and Pelop's line, to mingle in scenes of thoughtless gaiety and dissipation, where I might accidentally hear the circumstances of my life recalled to mind, where, in the silly fable of the day, each erring female might be, at least in thought, compared to her in whom my soul's respect and love were centered. I devoted what time I could spare, from my newly-imposed duties, to agriculture and the improvement of my estates. The bowers I raised, the trees I planted, did not reproach me with my parent's errors, the whispering woods around me did not echo to the voice of calumny or complaint.

"Before the period of my misfortunes, I

have heard it said that I was gay, and attached, even to a fault, to those fashionable societies, of which I was often the soul and spirit. But I am inclined to think ;" and here Sir Harold's voice and countenance assumed the expression of one who related a narrative of an indifferent person, with whose fate he is not perfectly acquainted, " that it was never so ; and again I charge you, my fair cousin," still addressing Matilda, " believe not those who say it was. An additional tie which attached me to solitude was, the attraction of my dear mother's company. When she knew me again, her conversation, by degrees resuming all its former charms, was to me, more delightful than the intercourse of any one I met with in society. She was again capable of enjoying the pleasures of reading. We again turned over those authors that had delighted us in former times ; again discussed those subjects, now rendered doubly dear, by the mournful and heart-thrilling recollection of the different period in which we formerly found pleasure in them ; when, with me, life and hope were

new, and SHE was the world's idol, applauded and adored. Taste, and sensibility, had thus with her survived the use of reason. Is it not a proof, sweet cousin, how much those qualities should be ranked above it? For her little Julia alone, she never enquired; and I had not the courage to reveal to my sister the sad truth of her mother's fate. The child of sensibility, beautiful, but sad in the gay opening of life, she seems formed for love and melancholy alone. I tremble for her future happiness, and I trust you will not now reveal to her a secret that might destroy her." After this caution he resumed :

" My time was now fully employed; my gentle mourner demanded from me every exertion; for, oh! my beloved friends, how much should we, who enjoy in its full power the use of reason, endeavour to alleviate the sufferings of those who labour under its temporary alienation! The addition to my former fortune, of the estate of the Rocks was, to me, rather a source of perplexity than of satisfaction. I was obliged to go down there, and I could not bring myself to part, for any

time, from the object of my mournful, yet pleasing cares. I soon wrote to Mrs. Carlyle, who had succeeded on the death of the woman that attended my mother to that delicate trust, to hasten to me with her. Julia and one attendant had accompanied me already to the Rocks. Mrs. Carlyle and her lady travelled together in a close carriage, and I took care to be apprized of the hour I might expect them. Having sent all my servants out of the way, on different pretexts, I met them myself on their arrival, which was towards night, and conducted Lady Julia and her companion to the apartment I had allotted for her, and which I had fitted up and adorned with every thing that could make her life tolerable. She was completely muffled up, from head to foot, in a wrapping pelisse and hood, and was mistaken by the driver, a north country lad and servant of my own, for another of the female domestics of the Abbey. I however dismissed him, and sent him back to his own country, that he might not afterwards remark in this neighbourhood upon the arrival of an additional

stranger, when he found out I had retained none of my former establishment but Mrs. Carlyle, and the domestic who attended Julia. By means of these precautions the existence of my mother was, till now, only known to myself and to Mrs. Carlyle, to whom I gave power to divert the curiosity of others, by inventing whatever tale she pleased, even though it were to my disadvantage. One satisfaction I thought I should have at the Rocks. When at Moss-cliff Abbey I had lately been distressed by an appearance which, added to the sufferings I had before sustained, contributed to drive me almost to distraction. At twelve, if I delayed one moment hastening to my mother, to allay her nightly returning terrors, I was reminded of my neglect, by the spirit of the murdered stripling, whose temerity had cost him his life. He too had a mother; a mother who had fondly doated on him; and now he came, and pointing with his thin transparent hand to the door where mine reposed, he besought me in plaintive accents, since he had died for her, that at least I should not desert the

duty to which I had sacrificed every other ; then pointing to his ghastly wound, he would depart and vanish into air. I thought, perhaps, to lose this apparition ; but the first night I was at the Rocks, exactly at twelve, he appeared to me, and asked me why I had left Lady Julia behind, a prey to anxiety and stronger alarms than ever ?

“ From the hour of her arrival she singularly attached herself to her new abode, which made me give up all thoughts of leaving it, or dividing my time between the Rocks and Moss-cliff Abbey, as I had at first proposed. Another reason drew me by stronger ties towards my other residence, even before she came to fix me in it, by the preference she gave it. An angel had once hovered there, and hallowed the spot by her presence. It was in a journey to London, which necessity obliged me to make, I learnt that secret. Reluctantly I went, but I soon wondered at the unwillingness I had felt to go ; I arrived ; I was blest with a vision ; an angel,” turning to Matilda, “ 'twas you. A new life seemed instilled into my veins ; I had been in a long

and burning fever; you came upon me like the breeze in the desert, like the refreshing stream to the parched lip of the traveller. I began a new course of years; my life became one dream of love; I moved in the magic of beauty, of harmony, and grace. But I have no recollection of this new life; you must retrace it to me, my cousin, for you know it; nay, help me to remember it, for the memory of those days is pleasant to me as a soft stream flowing, wave after wave, over one oppressed with the heats of summer, as the earliest, sweetest, most artless music of spring, to one just escaped from the bed of death. Tell me then of this new life, Matilda; recall it, for you know it."

"Would we could recall you to peace, to tranquillity, to every happiness," replied Mrs. Melbourne, with a look in which unutterable compassion was expressed.

"Do you indeed desire it," he eagerly exclaimed, "I thank you for that wish, and for your sake I will let myself be recalled. I thought that no one cared for me, for the last time I was in London they looked cold on me,

and told me so. I was the world's favourite, but the world has cast me off; and will you indeed assist me to bear the load of woe you have discovered, and will you soothe the sorrows that I so long have endured alone?"

"We will, we will," exclaimed Matilda, affected by the preceding scene with a variety of the most painful and contradictory sensations.

It was not until his cousins had repeatedly reiterated the promise he had required of them, that they were suffered by the Baronet to depart, which they did, hardly knowing whether they ought most to deplore the sad fate of Lady Julia Melbourne, to compassionate the unfortunate Sir Harold, or to regret Arbella's imprudent and ill-timed curiosity.

CHAP. VI.

Fumi di fasto, ed ombre d'onor sono ;
Ed amor proprio quei, che v'han tenuto
Tanti anni, e tengori fuor, del cammin buono.

TANSILLO. LA BALIA.

THE shock that Lady Torrendale's spirits had received from the recent scene at Sir Harold Melbourne's, was such that she declared it absolutely impossible she should ever completely recover while she remained in that neighbourhood. Lord and Lady Strathallan were invited to spend a week at Lady Lyndhurst's, after which they were to proceed on a visiting tour to several friends. This scheme would fill up the time till the period returned for enjoying the pleasures of London ; but as Lady Torrendale was not included in it, she got her physician to prescribe Cheltenham as absolutely necessary to restore her shattered

nerves to their tone. Matilda rather rejoiced in the departure of Strathallan and his bride, as withdrawing from her sight, an object, that was in danger sometimes of exciting recollections, painful, if not fatal to her peace. She had promoted their happiness as much as was in her power, and did not fear that the newly implanted taste for benevolence which she had encouraged in the bosom of Lady Strathallan should wither amid scenes that might present so many more objects worthy of real compassion. One dear remembrance she wished to keep of both. Emily, even if she had not been the sister of Strathallan, would have always been a favorite with her; but this partiality was greatly increased by the pity and interest with which she had lately inspired her.

During the course of the last six months, Miss Melbourne had been shocked and distressed to observe the roses that had glowed on the cheeks of her young favorite, already exchanged for the paleness and sickly languor of fashionable life. The latter part of the time Lady Torrendale had spent in London,

had been fatal to Emily's health and improvement. About the period of Miss Langrish's dismission, her Ladyship suddenly was heard to declare, that she could enjoy no pleasure of which her dear little Emily did not partake. She could not bear to appear in society, without acting some prominent part ; and that of an interesting mother, she thought would be equally new, and attractive. One of her beaux, after seeing them together, having observed that the finished beauties of the charming mother never appeared in greater lustre than when grouped with the unfolding attractions of the blooming child ; Lady Torrendale never afterwards made her appearance in any scene of amusement, unaccompanied by her attendant cherub : satisfied if, while the gentlemen crowded round the youthful stranger, or admired the diamonds that prematurely sparkled on her pretty white hand, they remarked, that hand, though lovely, equalled not her mother's. On Lady Strathallan's arrival at Woodlands, she had undertaken to remedy the effects of the dissipation in which her young sister-in-law had lately indulged ;



and, with her usual pedantry and presumption, prosecuted her design with so much zeal and so little judgment, that the wearied and tormented girl was often heard to implore in vain for any intermission from the severity of perpetual application, if it were even being employed upon the plainest and homeliest needle-work. From this Scylla and Charybdis, Matilda designed to rescue her young friend, by requesting she might spend the time of Lady Torrendale's excursion to Cheltenham, with her. She urged her request in the last visit the Countess paid her, and found her Ladyship in a humor to grant it. The idea of departure always raised her spirits ; her adieu partook of the hurry and bustle in which she found herself : " I can never repay your kindness and attention to Emily," she said ; " adieu, my dear Miss Melbourne—we are all in the greatest confusion you see, and I hope that will apologize for this short farewell."

" A concise farewell may suit with your Ladyship's feelings," said Lady Strathallan, who had accompanied the Countess ; " but,"

she added, turning on Matilda, a countenance more than usually solemn, and which had, in its style and expression something even beyond its common appearance, impressive and *grandioso*. “ I have debts to this young lady which cannot so easily be acquitted.”

Her air, her look, her motion, all showed that she meditated *quelque grand coup*, but what it might be, surpassed her young friend’s faculty of guessing ; at length, taking the opportunity (while Lady Torrendale was making her parting speeches to Mrs. Melbourne) of continuing her address. “ This,” said she, offering a case that seemed to contain jewels, “ will serve sometimes to remind you of an hour, in which you displayed a greatness of character that can never be remembered without admiration. I have meditated how to reward it. On that day you gave me a portrait. I now insist on your accepting one in return.”

Not doubting that the case contained Lady Strathallan’s picture, Matilda was near mentally exclaiming, “ Ah what an exchange!” but instantly checking the unguarded feeling,

she thanked her Ladyship with warmth for this proof of affectionate attention, and assured her she should ever consider it among the most valuable of her possessions.

"Then you promise me sacredly," resumed the Viscountess, "to keep it, and that nothing shall tempt you to part with it." Matilda readily gave the desired promise.

"Then take it," said Lady Strathallan, looking earnestly at her, "for now you deserve it; and may it prove," she continued embracing her with more warmth than she often betrayed, "the pledge of the perfect confidence that from this moment shall subsist between us. I have only one more favor to ask," she added, "will you write to me?"

Miss Melbourne having willingly agreed to keep up an intercourse already so pleasantly established, felt herself affected by these proofs of sincere attachment in the Viscountess, and had mingled something more of tenderness in her farewell, than she had ever expected to do on parting with Lady Strathallan and Lady Torrendale; but the former, in whose

character Miss Mountain might for a moment be suspended, but could never be forgot, had already resumed her wonted formality of manner and deportment, and as she sailed out of the room with her usual stately grace, left her young friend more full of curiosity to examine her present, than of regret for her departure, which afforded an opportunity for doing so. She hastily opened the shagreen case which she expected would contain the portrait of Lady Strathallan, nor could she forbear internally smiling at the supposed vanity which had dictated the remark in presenting it, "you now deserve it." How was the course of her feelings changed in a moment, when, instead of the expected portrait, she beheld the brooch that some months before she had confided to the care of Lady Strathallan, as containing her husband's picture. Her first idea was that there must be some mistake, but then recollecting the precautions her Ladyship had taken against her present being returned, and the tenor of the whole discourse she had previously held to her, she saw the whole circumstance at once in its

true light, and perceived this was the manner in which this eccentric and generous spirit chose to prove to her the esteem, the confidence, her recent conduct had excited. She also observed that the brooch had been reset for her with small diamonds, instead of pearls, and that the case contained besides, an elegant set of ornaments in pearls and diamonds, to match it. Lady Strathallan, who, with her strange solemnity of deportment, possessed a fund of romantic exaltation of ideas, that would have enabled her well to support the character of the Lady Blanche's, and Lady Belerma's of former days, and who gloried in being above the little jealousies and weaknesses of her sex, had thought this was a method truly sublime, to convince her noble-minded young friend that she had a nature as unsus- picious, a "spirit as proud as her own." What was to be done? Still, to attempt to return it, would appear a tacit confession on Matilda's part, that the present was not as completely without danger, as Lady Strathallan wished to suppose it. This Lady's overstrained heroism, which made her overlook

the seeming impropriety she forced her young friend to commit, placed her in a truly awkward and perplexing predicament. All Miss Melbourne's consolation was to look, literally, at "the bright side of the picture;" and accept this as the most grateful acknowledgment of the success of her unremitting efforts to promote the happiness of her friends, and to forget the sacrifice she had made of her own. She could not but be proud of such a distinguished tribute to the purity of her intentions; but as Matilda's confidence in herself, the result of a modest, yet firm consciousness of internal rectitude, was of a nature totally distinct from wilful presumption, she contented herself with restoring the much disputed portrait to its original place on Mrs. Melbourne's bureau, which terminated the consequences of a step, which Lady Strathallan, in the self-complacence and pride of her heart, called a "magnanimous;" but which Matilda, perhaps more truly, considered as a distressing action.

CHAP. VII.

'Tis an old maxim in the schools,
That flattery's the food of fools;
Yet now and then your men of wit
Will condescend to take a bit.

SWIFT.

AND now the bustle of servants and tradesmen, the various preparations that precede the departure of greatness, announced the secession of the Torrendale family from the Derbyshire neighbourhood. Already had Emily, with moist eyes, taken a tender farewell of her brother, and wept at parting with him, because he was going for some time; and at bidding farewell to Lady Strathallan, because it was possible, she said, she might soon return.

Lady Torrendale was to set off in a few days for Cheltenham; Spencer, to whom the

waters were recommended as conducive to his perfect recovery, was to be of the party. Though suffering little from the effects of his quarrel, except the mortification of having one eye still covered, there was evidently a weight that hung upon his spirits at times sufficient to alarm the watchful tenderness of his mother; and though she was pretty well satisfied that she had little to fear from the partiality he had once professed for Arbella, her Ladyship was determined, before she left the country *d'en avoir le cœur net*, as she phrased it, upon the subject. We must then imagine the mother and son seated on opposite sofas; her Ladyship employed in her new and favorite amusement of plaiting chips; Spencer, indolently lounging, sometimes returning, and more often neglecting, the caresses of Floss, who most ambitiously raising himself on his hind legs, sought the honor of licking his hand. After a silence of some continuance, the Countess began the conversation, observing, " You look uncommonly well to-day, Spencer; you will only

require a month at Cheltenham completely to recover your former self. But I had forgotten—the rooms and walks may not present the same attraction; for I tell you candidly I shall not take Arbella with me. She has made herself talked of, without attaining celebrity. I do not know whether you clearly understand me; but I am perfectly satisfied there is no other expression that would exactly convey my meaning; in short she has played her cards ill, and made it disagreeable to me to have any thing farther to say to her, beyond the civility of a common acquaintance; but with you it may be different; I do not inquire into your secrets. She may still have a tyrannic influence, a kind of habitual sway, and in trying to break the spell you may only find each scene recal, in livelier colours, your former intercourse with the dashing *belle* of Cheltenham. Have I guessed it? and will it indeed be *le plus loin, le plus serré?*"

"Certainly, madam, if you like."

"If I like! what a strange answer! you have long had my opinion on the subject."

“ Why then mine is, that it would make a very pretty motto.”

“ A pretty motto! what do you think I am talking of?”

“ Are you not asking my opinion, madam, about that seal with two doves each holding in its bill an end of a true lover’s knot, one that Lady Honora means to send to Captain Seabright?”

“ ‘Tis true I alluded to it, but I was asking your opinion of Arbella.”

“ Oh, Arbella!”

“ Yes Arbella, Captain Fitzroy; and I must tell you I am tired of this trifling.”

“ So am I (yawning and stretching himself) very tired, I assure you.”

“ I am glad to hear you say so; then I am to suppose the alteration in my plans, with regard to her, makes no difference to you?”

“ None in the least, madam.”

“ I am then to conclude the silly affair that once gave me some uneasiness quite broken off between you?”

“ If you please, madam.”

“ ‘If you please, madam?’ there is some-

thing strangely unsatisfactory in your manner of giving a satisfactory answer," resumed her Ladyship, with a half laugh; " I insist upon knowing what is the matter with you, Spencer, you seem half asleep?"

" Would I were asleep indeed;" cried Fitzroy, suddenly throwing off his apparently listless calm—that I were in a long, long sleep; or that the occurrences of the last three months were but a frightful dream."

" What is it has annoyed you to such a degree, my dearest boy, and damped your charming spirit. If it is that ugly black patch, consider that while you continue to wear it, you look more like a hero than ever, and when you leave it off, the contrast will be more striking, than it otherwise could possibly be. Don't you remember the lines Alcæus composed when your accident was recent, in which he contrived to bring in your attentions to Miss Rachael Adonijah, the beautiful one-eyed Jewess. Under the figure of a brother and sister he pourtrays a much tenderer relation. They say the little wretch adapted it from a Greek epi-

gram, but I believe it is his own. Stay, I think I have it written out some where."

" Of his right eye young Æcon was bereft,
His sister Leonilla of her left.

Give her thine eye, sweet boy, so shall ye prove
The goddess she, and thou the god of love."

" Confound Alcæus and the whole tribe of scribbling impertinent poetasters!" exclaimed Spencer, starting up and striking the table with a vehemence which startled her Ladyship. " To what end, madam, do you thus needlessly torture my feelings? Though to be sure," he added, in a lowered voice, and resuming something of his former languid calmness, " to be blind would be perhaps the only way to be reconciled to my present situation."

" To be blind ! you alarm and distress me, child, by these mysterious expressions. I assure you if you think your affair has been a disadvantage to you, you are wrong ; it has produced a very favourable sensation among a certain set, and wherever you go

you are looked upon with rather more interest than less; there is your former flirt, Helen, who regrets nothing but that it was not in her cause you engaged yourself; you might have your choice of her, or the die-away Lavinia Crossbrook, who was in fits when she heard what had happened; but I would advise you to let them both wear the willow, and think seriously of our dear little Peruvian Princess, Miss Bullion Ingoldsby, who has mines of wealth at her own disposal, with the possible prospect of a peerage in her own right, and who said very lately in my hearing, that instead of being disadvantageously altered, you would now make more impression than ever."

" 'More impression?' do I indeed?" said Spencer, looking up languidly, and "lighted up his faded eye" for a moment, with that expression of satisfaction, which coquettes, whether male or female, experience in the gratification of their reigning passions; but soon recollecting himself, with a deep sigh, he added, "it is useless to think of it now;

it is all over—yes, in short, madam, I am married."

"Married! and without consulting me," said her Ladyship, hastily, and in a tone of evident pique and disappointment; but, changing almost immediately to one of mingled reproach and tenderness, "you need not have feared me, Spencer," she added, "for I believe you have not a friend more zealously attached to your interests; but come," (a little recovering her good humour) "let us see what this sudden affair is. I must know all about it, the when, where, and who; is it the sentimental Miss Crossbrook, who has insisted upon a private marriage? well that is no great harm, the girl has a good fortune at present, and will have a better at the death of her brother, who is going off, dear complaisant soul, in a most obliging consumption."

"Madam, you need not distress yourself: it is not Miss Crossbrook," replied Spencer.

"Perhaps the Scotch heiress, Lady Margaret Maclean; though her high stiff relations would not approve of such unceremonious

courtships I should imagine ; or is it her sister, Lady Georgiana ? or perhaps one of the Miss Kingstons, our rich nabob's daughters ; I remember you were a great favourite there."

" True," observed Spencer, " I might have had any of them, but—"

" No, I am not right yet ? I am certain it is not Miss Ferrars ; it cannot be Miss Melbourne," added her Ladyship ; and a look of angry suspicion glanced over her features, as she pronounced the name.

" I wish it were," resumed Fitzroy, with a sigh, " it is—what use is there in longer concealment, since it must out ; it is—Miss Hautenville."

" Now Captain Fitzroy," said the Countess, with a look of the most serious displeasure, " you are pleased to jest with what, I suppose, you term, among your more favored intimates, my silly maternal anxiety ; yet it is not the less real. Miss Hautenville ! that is very likely to be true indeed !"

" Upon my soul I wish it were not."

" Married to Miss Hautenville at three and twenty ! with your person, advantages, and

expectations, thrown yourself away upon a woman ten years older, and so every way unworthy of you?"

"True, Madam, as you say, with my person, advantages, and expectations," repeated Spencer, surveying himself with complacency, yet with a sigh, "but what could I do! She was always with me, and—a—I saw nobody else; when she was not reading, we were of course sentimentalizing, or flirting, or that sort of thing: there is no other conversation you know; and so—by Jove I don't know how it was—I believe she has a devilish deal of art: she took up some foolish thing I said in the way of gratitude, (for while she was devoting herself to me, I could not tell her she was old and ugly) and said I had made her a promise; and when I wanted to be off, I thought she would have died; for, with all her faults she loves me to distraction. At last I told her to keep it a secret, and that I would; for to say the truth I thought at that time it was all over with me, and that I might as well take pity: so you see how it

was, and how impossible it was for me to help myself."

"And I see what an elegant creature I have to present for my daughter-in-law," added her Ladyship, with an affected contempt, which concealed the smothered anguish of disappointed ambition. "Oh, Spencer, how shall I endure it?"

"You shall not have it to endure," replied Fitzroy, in a more natural tone than he had in the latter part of the dialogue employed; "for, by Jove, though she has taken advantage of my cursed folly, I will not expose myself farther, by ever acknowledging her as my wife."

"Spoken with a spirit that becomes your blood," exclaimed Lady Torrendale, a little revived by this assurance. "The creature will not gain much by her arts and her canting: whenever I came to the house—'I am giving Spencer a little advice; I am repeating to Captain Fitzroy what your Ladyship says'—Oh, my Ladyship!—If ever I believe in disinterested female friendship again!—There is no way of breaking this marriage,"

continued her Ladyship, after a pause of painful reflection ; “ unfortunately you are of age, and so is the Lady.”

“ That she is, twice over, I believe,” replied Spencer, with a bitter sigh.

“ Well then, all that can be done for the present is, to preserve the same prudent silence you have hitherto maintained ; and above all things to keep this dis—” she had nearly said disgraceful affair ; but changing the term in compliment to her son’s feelings to one of milder import, the Countess continued, “ all you have to do, my dear Spencer, is to keep this disagreeable affair from your father’s knowledge, who is apt to be at once violent, refractory, and old-fashioned in his notions, and we will see what can be done for you. Marriage, though the commonest and the easiest speculation, is not the only way of rising, with interest, and family talents like yours. Some way or other I am persuaded, you are intended to surpass that Strathallan. It is my *presentiment*, and you know I have great faith in *presentiment*.”

“ Strathallan may be after all our best;

friend on this occasion," Spencer murmured; but his mother did not hear him, and after consoling herself with the reflection that at least he had disappointed "that jilt Arbella," she left him, in order to have the pleasure of being the first bearer of these agreeable tidings to a young lady, whom she had often told "in confidence," that "could she chuse among the various young women to whom her volatile Spencer had, at different times, devoted his attentions, she knew no person to whom she could so willingly resign him as her charming self."

Her Ladyship anticipated in the rage and despair of her young *protégée*, at least one delicious treat, but she knew not, or she chose to continue wilfully ignorant of Miss Ferrar's superiority over her, even in that art on which she prided herself, and forgot that a degree of dissimulation and self-command, if it may be acquired by the fine lady, is natural to the coquette of every rank.

The communication was not new to Arbella; Miss Hautenville, or, as she must now be called, the Honourable Mrs. Fitzroy, hearing

some talk of a removal in which she was not included, and being too good a military wife not to be willing to accompany her husband in his campaigns, had immediately announced her intentions to Mrs. Stockwell, and dropping the veil of secrecy (which she considered as not only inconvenient but impolitic) announced to her former patroness, in very peremptory terms, the necessity of providing herself with another companion, as she, for her own part meant, in future, to be the constant one of the amiable and passionate Captain Fitzroy. Mrs. Stockwell, after repeatedly blessing herself, exclaiming to more stars than she knew the names of, mingling reproaches and congratulations, began at length to express her doubts of the accuracy of the lady's statement, or at least her wonder that such a transaction should take place in her own house, "unknown to her." Miss Hautenville coolly reminded her of a little "excrescence" she made early one morning to spend the whole day with a friend three miles off; in which propitious moment (a licence having been previously secured) the

enamoured youth had been bound in those chains which secured him her's for ever, by the aid of a young Clergyman (whose literary attempts Miss Hautenville had patronized) in the presence of no other witnesses than that lady's own maid, and Spencer's man, and in the very parlour in which she had now the honour of making the communication to her. The question to which Mrs. Stockwell returned was, how to supply Mrs. Fitzroy's place? To be left alone was shocking; it was besides so very unfashionable; yet she could hardly hope again to meet with a companion so well-drest, so "so well-read," and "comed of so good a family" as Miss Hautenville. The two first qualities her long neglected niece Arbella possessed to admiration; and, for the last, her youth and various attractions might amply compensate.

On the very evening, therefore, previous to the discovery made by Lady Torrendale, this prudent lady dispatched, to her niece, a long epistle, explanatory and apologetical, telling her that if she was really tired of fine airs and fine company, she would feel herself

most happy again in her society. The intelligence of Spencer's marriage with Miss Hautenville was a thunder-stroke to Arbella, and prevented her at first from attending to, or even understanding the rest of the contents of this epistle; hearing, however, that an answer was expected, she rallied her spirits, took up the letter again, and smiled as she looked at it; then perceiving, upon a reperusal, the only part that remained for her to act, if she wished to preserve any degree of dignity, the duped, despised, every way disappointed Arbella prepared, with her usual admirable presence of mind, to go through the last act of her tragi-comedy with spirit. The place where Spencer resided was no longer an abode for her; accordingly, with a frankness and grace which distinguished every thing she did, she at once accepted her aunt's proposal; for the air of ease and candour that ran through Arbella's reply, she was, perhaps, very much indebted to that natural openness and generosity of disposition, which really hardly permitted her to

harbour, for twenty-four hours, a serious resentment towards any one who had injured her, particularly in a matter she considered so much beneath her attention, as money.

After a night of agony, the dreadful details of which she wisely resolved should remain buried for ever in her own bosom, she prepared, with a smooth brow, and a countenance of apparent openness and gaiety, to encounter the scrutinizing glances of the Countess of Torrendale; they met on the landing-place, for that lady had just retired from the distressing interview with Spencer, that has been related. Her separation from her young friend, she had long determined upon; and, without busying herself about the possible arrangements of Miss Ferrars, she resolved to put it upon the uncertainty of her stay at the place to which she was now going, indifferent accommodations, probability of making a visiting tour, and several more excuses which she was to convey in language as polite as possible. Composing her countenance to its most benign expression, "I

declare I was looking for you, my dear Miss Ferrars," she began; " I am truly mortified to think—."

" I hope nothing disagreeable has happened, Madam," interrupted Arbella, with an air of assumed concern, " I thought I was to have wished your Ladyship joy."

" Joy," reiterated Lady Torrendale."

" Yes, Madam, for the happy event that has taken place in your family; may you and Captain-Fitzroy——" Lady Torrendale coloured extremely.

" So, Madam," she said, " you have been listening."

" No, Madam," replied Miss Ferrars, with unaffected dignity, " I have not been listening, but this letter," presenting Mrs. Stockwell's billet, " will inform you how I came acquainted with the event."

" You will be so good, Miss Ferrars," resumed her Ladyship, " as to step into my dressing-room, this is no place for ~~discussions~~ of such a nature."

Arbella obeyed, and then added, " I wish Madam, to communicate to you a circum-

stance in which my happiness is very much concerned. My poor aunt has expressed in this note a great desire to have me as her companion for the winter. Her wishes coincide with mine, yet still, if you wish me to accompany you, I would not, for the world ——”

“ Make yourself quite easy on that head, my dear Miss Ferrars,” replied Lady Torrendale, sarcastically; “ it is never my way to come across the inclinations of young ladies; my carriage and servants are at your command, whenever you chuse to order them. I never aspired to be the rival of Mrs. Stockwell, nor ever shall.” In these last words the Countess had endeavoured to throw all the mingled bitterness and scorn of which her nature was susceptible, and she paused triumphantly to notice their effect.

“ This generous and unreserved compliance was almost beyond my hopes; and overwhelms me with gratitude,” exclaimed Arbella, “ particularly as I know it must be at the risk of a temporary inconvenience to your Ladyship, for when one’s plans are arranged——”

“ None, in the least, and I beg ——”

“ I feel your Ladyship’s goodness, and I know what you would say, indeed I should have been miserable without your permission —”

“ Oh ! you have my full permission,” with a smile of contempt.

“ How good you are, how kind it is, thus to put yourself out of the question ; yet believe me Madam, nothing but the consideration of my poor aunt’s solitary situation —”

“ Ah ! now I have at length found the way to vex her,” thought Lady Torrendale ; “ Is Mrs. Stockwell going to lose her companion ? then you must have no doubt been surprised ; my dear Miss Ferrars, at the reason your aunt gives for parting with Miss Hautenville.”

“ Surprised, Madam ? I own I could hardly have believed it of Captain Fitzroy. Few young men, at his age, have sense and courage to despise the world, and make merit alone the object of their choice. May they both be as happy as they deserve to be. Miss Hautenville (I can speak it from a long acquaintance) though not possessed of

brilliant accomplishments, is a sensible, well-informed —” Her Ladyship bit her lip. “ This is past bearing, sure she cannot be truly indifferent, and yet how otherwise could a woman, and so young a woman, preserve such perfect self-command.”

The Countess forgot, during this short argument with herself, that she had no longer to deal with the open, ingenuous, affectionate Arbella, who, but a summer before, had flung out of that very dressing-room, and vowed never to re-enter it, in all the heat of passionate resentment; that giddy Arbella, who was equally open in avowing her indignation, and imprudent in betraying her partiality.

Since that time these finished actresses had assisted in perfecting each other, and Arbella now surpassed her mistress, by as much as a person of sense (whatever be the undertaking) always excels a fool.

Finding it, at all events, absolutely necessary to change her battery, if she wished for any gratification in her favourite passion; her Ladyship instantly bade her eyes exchange

their former forbidding expression, for that look of tender interest, of kind concern which, when Fitzroy assumed, it was so irresistible, and which, even with her, was bewitching. "I know, my dear Miss Ferrars," said she, kindly taking her hand (a trick she had, whenever she meditated mischief, as if she feared her victim should escape her) that you speak as you feel, and are above all disguise; but now tell me truly, and do not fear you shall ever have to repent your confidence, are you not a *little* disappointed; do you not think we HAVE BOTH a right to be a little disappointed at Spencer's thus throwing himself away? I will myself candidly own to you, that I am not much pleased with the match. Come, I see by your eyes you are of my opinion; charming sensibility! acknowledge the truth to me, my dearest girl, and do not fear to meet a rigid monitor. Spencer is, indeed, a young man who would more than justify ——"

Miss Ferrars looked down, blushed, hesitated; a tear of sensibility seemed to tremble in her eye; and all that spirit which she had

summoned up against the haughtiness of the Countess, appeared ready to give way before the melting force of her unexpected kindness. For a moment she stood irresolute, then throwing herself into the arms of her noble friend, "Your Ladyship's generosity overcomes me," she said, "and merits, on my part, a return of similar frankness. To you I will then venture to acknowledge those feelings which, though they might be termed by the world an excess of absurd and romantic weakness, yet ——"

Lady Torrendale's cheeks glowed, her eyes sparkled, and, as she listened in panting exultation to this exordium, she was ready to exclaim with Sir Peter Teazle, "Aye, now I believe the truth is coming out!" she however deferred her triumph, in order to render it more complete. Arbella continued.

"From the time of Captain Fitzroy's being wounded in a duel, in which my name was unhappily brought forward; honour, compassion, pleaded so strongly for him ——"

"Compassion!" exclaimed her Ladyship starting.

" Yes, Madam, it may be a weakness, but it appeared to me, I had no choice left ; and though inclination no longer seconded his claim on my heart, I resolved to sacrifice it entirely, to what I considered as my duty."

" Duty ! humph — "

" Hear me, Lady Torrendale. Captain Fitzroy's and mine were never congenial characters ; and his capricious unfeeling conduct had long ago conquered any little girlish partiality which your Ladyship might formerly have observed. I anticipated with him nothing but a life of frigid indifference ; the hardest for one of my temper to endure with patience ; but I had chosen my lot, and was determined," and here Arbella assumed an air the most theatrically grand, " to submit heroically to my destiny. When thus engaged, in what I thought an inextricable entanglement, the discovery of Captain Fitzroy's more prudent choice, came at once to satisfy my honour, and relieve me from the self-imposed obligations to which I had devoted myself. I feel now like a bird released from the — "

"Well, Miss Ferrars, I have not time now to listen to a detail of your feelings," interrupted her Ladyship, abruptly, while her countenance expressed the bitterest disappointment; "if you are in haste to leave me, the carriage shall be ordered at whatever hour you think fit; and, as I have many letters to write, and matters to arrange, which will engage me till night, I will take this opportunity of expressing my sincere wishes for your health and happiness, with Mrs. Stockwell; and my regret, that it was not in my power to make my house any longer an agreeable residence to you." With these words she flung out of the room, leaving Arbella clearly mistress of the field; and not aware that that young lady had already acquired the difficult art of masking a breaking heart under the appearance of gaiety; and that Arbella took hours, after this temporary exertion of spirit, to recover breath, voice, power, in short, to support with tolerable patience, the load of hated life; her Ladyship continued, through the day, to indulge her wonder how her young friend could, by

any means, have been brought to become insensible to merit so shining as Spencer's, when she ought rather to have lamented that she had not herself followed the Spartan rule, of never exhibiting her tactics too often to the same enemy.

CHAP. VIII.

Oh Lady ! since I've worn thy gentle chain,
How oft have I deplored each wasted hour,
When I was free—and had not learned to love !

LORD STRANGFORD. CAMÖENS.

MRS. FITZROY, in so formally notifying to Mrs. Stockwell her intention of leaving her, had forgot that a small circumstance was necessary in order to put her plan in execution—her husband's consent. The moment he understood her design, Spencer assured her that “ though nothing could mortify him to such a degree, he held himself bound, in honour, to give her warning. If she attempted to follow him to Cheltenham it would not be in his power to take the least notice of her, as he did not wish to be made the subject of conversation at that place—that he was also unable to supply her with

money for her appearance there, and that he therefore advised her, as a friend, to stay, till they could arrange some future plan of life, with a lady whose company she had till now found so agreeable. Lady Torrendale seconded the sentiments of her son; and finding herself despised by her husband, and disconcerted by his family, poor Miss Hautenville reaped but few advantages from her unworthy artifices; and was but too happy to accept the offer of the same accommodation she had formerly enjoyed with Mrs. Stockwell. This poor woman, still the dupe of that lady's pretensions to lineage and literature, asked nothing in return for her hospitality, but the privilege of deplored, wherever she went, in terms properly pathetic, the hard fate of her dear friend, the hon-o-ra-ble Mrs. Fitzroy; who, "though she was wife to a captain of horse, and, what was more, daughter-in-law to an Earl, was reduced for to put up with her poor accommodations, and be her companion still, poor thing!" But the good lady was obliged to decline this *comedie larmoyante*, wherever the "Ho-

no-ra-ble Mrs. Fitzroy" made her appearance, who seemed to find, in the pleasure of lording it over her friend, more completely than ever, some compensation for the pain which the conduct of others made her experience.

Not so Arbella—when the bustle occasioned by the departure of the Torrendales, and the momentary self-possession she was forced to assume, no longer kept up her spirits; she looked in vain, on every side, for any circumstance to mitigate her regret, or diminish her mortification. The prolonged stay of Mrs. Fitzroy, filled up the measure of her vexations. They had always hated each other, and to be forced perpetually to endure the presence of her, who, if she did not possess Spencer's heart, had at least received his vows, was perhaps the severest suffering Arbella's tortured bosom had yet endured. She sunk into a dejection the more alarming, as it was totally at war with her general disposition and character. She had loved sincerely, tenderly, passionately, as she was capable of loving: and she found all these soft feelings in a moment

scorned and outraged, in a manner the most mortifying, the least to be anticipated. As if it had been decreed that his image should, in every circumstance of her life, be associated in her mind with that of his mother, whom he so strongly resembled, she felt, at the same moment, cruelly hurt at Lady Torrendale's abrupt desertion of her. That it would be followed by that of many of her former gay friends, she plainly foresaw. After having been, from her first entrance into life, in constant chase of an illusion, the bubble burst, and she found herself, while yet in youthful bloom, a wreck, the sport of every malignant blast upon the shoreless sea of fashion, on which she had so carelessly ventured all her hopes. She became gloomy, retired, and was with difficulty drawn from her home. Matilda sometimes made use of the attraction of Miss Swanley, who was to have been of the Cheltenham party, but for a fit of abstraction which made her in the place of a Birth-day Ode on the Countess, put into her hand the plan of a tragedy, for which it appeared the scenes she had recently

witnessed had furnished some hints—these are a few of the notes :

“Plan for the Tragedy of the Rival Brothers.

Orthon, (the jealous gloomy tyrant,) Lord Torrendale—his character—particularly afternoon conversation—furnish fine hints.

Artainta, (the ambitious artful step-mother,) the deceit, malice, faded charms of the gypsy Countess can furnish *un beau canevas*—how suitable to her present appearance, the scene in which the declining Artainta opens the play, singing,

Faded beauty, waning charms,
Where are fled your conquering arms?

In the first scene to be gorgeously apparelled—in the trial scene, (where she is to be called to account for strangling the sultan,) disshevelled, pale, haggard—Lady T——’s exact morning face. Lady S—— stands for Phedyma, the young Sultana, as Lady T—— does for the elder one, or sultana validi. Mem. to make a scene between them in the style of the Rival Queens—an excellent

study—great pity I was not present at their grand quarrel yesterday—Alcæus said it was as good as a comedy—no genius—I would have made a tragedy of it—must endeavour to keep in the way, and if they don't soon begin again, foment a little dispute, in which to study their character—at the end we will overthrow the machinations of the step-mother—hang the worthless Ariamnes, (Spencer) and poisoning the other interlocutors, establish on the throne the virtuous Artazires, who (like Lord Strathallan) shall be constellation of talents, virtues, &c.”

“ Upon my word ! study my character !—hang my son Spencer !—I shall take care how I admit such ingenious young ladies as inmates !” Such were the exclamations of Lady Torrendale, upon perusing the fatal scroll ; and poor Sappho, deprived for ever of the sunshine of her favor and protection, had time to lament, in the most melodious strains, her not having remarked how a paper was docketed before she delivered it. There was, in Sappho’s character, an inconsistency for which it was long before Matilda could account.

That she was averse to solitude and obscurity was evident; yet so *distract* was she in the ordinary intercourse of life, that where once she received applause, she ten times met with mortification.

The first symptom Arbella gave of a dawning interest in the world again, was an enquiry relative to Sir Harold and the lady who had once been an object of such lively solicitude to her. “I hope you never told him it was I, and I alone that planned and effected the forcible entry, which produced so unexpected and painful a scene,” she said, “otherwise much as I feel relieved by visiting you, I must indulge in the pleasure less frequently, for fear of meeting him.”

“ You may be sure,” replied Matilda, “ that I have not communicated to him any thing that might increase his vexation and uneasiness. But as the discovery did not really tend to my cousin’s disadvantage, I think he has, on the whole, been happier since it has been made; his manner has been more tranquil, since he has not laboured under a load of conscious concealment.”

Arbella asked many more questions respecting Lady Julia Melbourne, and hinted a desire to be admitted to see her; but this curiosity Matilda always repressed, conscious that though she had unlimited access to this unhappy lady, the extending the privilege, but for once, even to the dearest intimate, could be productive of no advantage, and might renew sufferings she dreaded to contemplate.

At other times the unfortunate Miss Ferrars would appear perfectly indifferent to all that passed, and mournfully rapt in former scenes, recapitulated, with a melancholy satisfaction, pleasures so short, so delusive, so fatal to her peace. Then would Matilda mingle tears with hers, 'till what appeared at first the tribute of sympathy, became, at length, an almost dangerous indulgence—for sometimes her treacherous heart would whisper, "she weeps for the dispersion of an illusion; I, for the destruction of real happiness."

The first interview Matilda had with Lady Julia after the late painful discovery, was productive of unexpected and distressing ef-

fects. Sir Harold had been desirous to try the power of her soothing conversation, from which he had himself experienced such beneficial effects, upon one who, at least when discoursing with him, almost always evinced the power of thinking justly: but he was disappointed in his hopes of giving her pleasure. Examining with anxious scrutiny, the downcast lovely features of Matilda, Lady Julia suddenly turned to her son, and said, "That is the lady without a fault;" then sighed, and with a kind of convulsive shudder, motioned her to withdraw, while the dejection in which she was usually plunged, appeared, for the rest of the day, visibly increased.

She often amused herself touching the harp, and it was from her those sweet plaintive tones had proceeded which Arbella formerly noticed. By degrees she became accustomed to, and even fond of, Matilda's society. Lady Julia's sufferings, her melancholy situation, her delicate and interesting appearance, that had prepossessed even strangers, increased to a degree of fondness, the compassion with which Mrs. Melbourne and her daughter be-

held her. To vary Sir Harold's amusements, Matilda often read to him; for she had adopted, from her mother, the idea, that it is to lose half the advantages of a voice that can render the feelings of the poet, not to be able to convey pleasure by the modulation of its tones, in speaking, as well as singing. This gave a variety to her powers of pleasing, while mere shewy accomplishments, by constant repetition, fatigue and disgust.

As he listened, one evening, delighted while she read to him part of the fifth book of Milton, which opens with the vision of Eve, he stopt her at the words,

“ My fairest, my espoused, my *latest* found !”

And repeating the line, in a low voice, with a marked emphasis on the last epithet, he inwardly murmured, “ *That* were bliss indeed ! but found *too late*”—the sigh and melancholy pause which followed this broken sentence plainly marked his meaning. The idea of the loss, the voluntary loss he had, for so many years sustained, was never absent from his mind. To secure to himself this treasure,

for the remaining years he had to live, he had recourse to an expedient which, for the time, awed and terrified Matilda. It was after one of those sallies of violence, which always made him, when recovered, fear she would detach herself wholly from him. On this occasion it was, perhaps, more than usually excusable. He had surprised his friends of Woodbine Lodge, conversing in Matilda's favorite arbour. Arbella endeavoured to smile at the amusing sallies of Sappho. Julia read at their feet, and Emily was busily cultivating her little garden. A kind of dejection soon stole over the whole party. This was the very spot in which Strathallan had, on the renewal of their intercourse, listened with such dangerous rapture to the music of Matilda; and the remembrance of the pain he had, on that occasion, given her feelings, imparted a sad and pensive shade to her contemplations. Yet, perhaps, the secret uneasiness that dwelt in every bosom, was a bond of union as powerful and sympathetic, though not so visible, as the most active and successful desire to please;

for certain it is that they passed the time in desultory converse, "pleasant, but mournful to the soul," 'till the resplendent moon,

"Peeped through the chambers of the fleecy east;
"Enlightened by degrees, and in her train,
"Led on the gentle hours*."

Oh! what a group was there to sit and weep,

"Beneath the trembling languish of her beam*."

Not a heart but had bled from the stings of ill-placed passion—not a mind but was attuned in harmony to the solemn scene, and felt the magic influence of the hour.

"What a lover's light!" exclaimed Sappho, as she remarked the strong line of brilliancy that fell upon the seat on which they reposed.

Sir Harold raising his eyes to the beautiful planet above them, half murmured, "Hast thou thy hall like Ossian, dwellest thou in the shadow of grief?"

* Thomson.

“ I would fain answer thy question, Sir Knight,” resumed Sappho, with affected solemnity; “ thou whose distinguished encouragement alike of music and the muse, entitles thee to rank with the glorious chief who patronized the bards that celebrated a night such as this :

“ The Roe is in the cleft of the rock.
The Heath-cock’s head is beneath his wing;
no beast, no bird is abroad, but the oyl and
the howling fox. She on a leafless tree. He
in a cloud on the hill *.”

“ Would it not be just the hour,” continued the fair enthusiast, who, when once possessed by the genius, or rather perhaps the demon of illusion, was not easily interrupted in her career, to address one’s favoured swain with some lay like those Shakespeare declares worthy to be

“ Sung by a fair queen in a summer’s bower,
“ With ravishing division to her lute.”

“ Miss Melbourne could do so,” said Sir Harold.

* Song of the Five Bards.

"If you wish it I will," replied Matilda, "though you know the lute is wanting," and, after musing a moment she begun the song of

"Too plain, dear youth, these tell-tale eyes."—

"I know that song," exclaimed Julia, suddenly turning from her book, "there was a Lord Arlington, who used to come to our house, and listen to mamma singing it, when papa was out. I remember she new set it to please him, and used to accompany it with her harp. Poor mamma! she sung it very sweetly before she died."

There was something so touching in the manner in which these words were pronounced by the poor little "more than orphan," as her brother had once emphatically called her—her innocence and total unconsciousness were so affecting, that Matilda, as she drew her tenderly towards her, felt a rising tear steal, unbidden, down her cheek: but their effect on Sir Harold was dreadful, and left her no doubt, if she could before have entertained one, that his sister had named the disturber of his family's honour

and peace. His eyes flushed fury, but then, as if endeavouring to command himself, he checked the muttered exclamation that seemed ready to escape his lips, and taking his sister's trembling hand, "poor innocent," he said, "the error was not thine!" Then darting away left the astonished group, and was soon seen pacing at a distance among the trees that partly shaded his hurried and unequal steps.

Matilda, vexed to have been, though unintentionally the cause of his emotion, and desirous to draw off the attention of the other ladies from it, attempted some general conversation, in which she was well seconded by Sappho. They again reverted to the beauty of the surrounding scenery; talked of the pleasure of social intercourse; and Miss Swanley, though she had not much reason, at this moment, to do it, congratulated herself on the sensible and animated circle to which she could always retire, when desirous to escape the impertinent curiosity and malicious dulness of a country village. Then sighing, recurred, (as she now almost always

did,) to the still greater gaiety she might have enjoyed, but for her own unpardonable inadvertence; which often, she observed, led her into errors, that the most pack-horse DULNESS, (to repeat her favourite expression,) would have avoided.

At length Matilda, who had lost sight of Sir Harold, grew so uneasy, she determined to return to the house, with the faint hope of finding him there. Abruptly rising, she exclaimed, "we should quite forget ourselves, talking by this soft moon-light, if it were not for these OTHER lights that stream so reproachfully, (to remind us of our neglect,) through the brier-bound casement."

Both ladies prepared, with alacrity, to obey her hint; and found Mrs. Melbourne surrounded by Sir Harold, and the children, whose playful gaiety, united to her solid good sense, seemed to have restored him again to reason and cheerfulness. She felt disposed to rally her daughter a little upon her stay; but readily guessed that it might be attributed, as usual, to Sappho, who often possessed much of the fascinating talent attributed in

the Allegory to Pity, and was fond of stealing upon the sports of the village maids, and captivating them with her “tales full of a charming sadness.” As for Sir Harold, he abstained from all remark, and seemed only desirous his own singularity and abruptness should be forgotten. By the resumed mildness and composure of his manner, which was dejected, but gentle in the extreme, he endeavoured to obtain Matilda’s forgiveness, for what he deemed an unwarrantable violence and indiscretion. He often looked in her eyes, as if endeavouring to read her secret thoughts ; could he have penetrated them, he would have only discovered the softest compassion and regret. Almost unable to tear himself from her, he took occasion to whisper her at parting, “I am very unfortunate, my sweet cousin ; at times I still am not master of myself, and then I alienate from me even those, whom I might otherwise interest ; but you can command me ; you can recal me from my wildest wanderings—do not refuse the power I delegate to you ; ‘tis all I have left to give.” He uttered these words with more

than his usual mournful earnestness ; but it was not till after his departure, that Matilda perceived, with a perturbation caused by the most painful surprize and emotion, that he had taken that opportunity to slip a ring on her finger. It was a hoop of gold, with the Italian word "*sempre*," raised in the middle, upon a ground of black enamel.

" What have you got here ? " said Arbella, "*'sempre'*, for ever ! That was the motto of the Medici family ! "

Alas ! it was the fatal pledge that bound Matilda to the most wretched of all the descendants of a family, distinguished also, for genius, for misfortunes, and crimes.

CHAP. IX.

Why need I launch into the praise of friendship ?
Friendship, that best support of wretched man,
Which gives us, when our life is painful to us,
A sweet existence in another's being.

ARBELLA, though she had recovered from the first surprise produced by learning Speneer's unaccountable infatuation, yet the more she reflected, felt it the more impossible to find a clue to such strange inconsistency. It might, perhaps, have been discovered in the principle that ruled his life ; that vanity, which had long led him to set so high a value on his own merit, that the most elevated rank, the most finished beauty, was deemed hardly worthy to aspire to his notice, had received a sudden and mortifying check. De-

prived of his usual resources, and dreading to become an object of mere compassion in those scenes where he had formerly been regarded with the tenderest interest; he readily accepted the intoxicating draught of flattery from the first hand that presented it. In Miss Hautenville there seemed nothing to fear; but Miss Hautenville surpassed him in his own arts. She had ingenuity to persuade him he was the object of a sincere and ardent passion, of which his then alarming situation at length forced from her the avowal. Her sensibility immediately made her of consequence in his eyes, and when we add, the advantage of their perpetual *tête-a-têtes*, we must only refer to her ability, and Captain Fitzroy's inveterate habit of coquetting, to explain the rest. As for his former *bien-aimée*, she began to derive consolation both from the flexibility and elasticity of her mind; it could bend to pleasures that afforded no gratification to Matilda, and it could rise against undeserved injury with a spirit, which, if it bespoke a smaller portion of sensibility, and had its source rather

in self-opinion than self-respect, yet, ultimately, answered the end of consolation as effectually as if it had derived its origin from a nobler principle. Matilda, without possessing the romantic extravagance of either, was the connecting link that united the fair enthusiasts; and tempered the vivacity of their sallies. Arbella was ready, at length, sincerely to subscribe to the superiority that she had formerly, amid the fancied triumphs of coquetry, rather insidiously allowed her unaffected and artless young friend; and Sappho, who might be said to possess the frankest vanity that ever woman had, used often to declare Miss Melbourne was the only beauty whom she did not envy for her charms; and who did not, in return, hate her for her talents.

Nothing now occurred to disturb the even tenor of Matilda's life, till the arrival of a letter from Lady Torrendale, in which, after slightly mentioning Emily, (about whom her Ladyship seemed to feel no farther anxiety, but rather to be desirous she should remain an unlimited time at the Lodge), she pro-

ceeded to inform her friend, that Strathallan, who was now with them, had most generously stepped forward on the occasion of Spencer's marriage ; and not only effected a complete reconciliation between him and his father, but prevailed so far with Lord Torrendale, by his earnest entreaties, and the representation he made of Spencer's embarrassed situation, as at length to obtain his consent to bestow on him the long withheld estate of Strath-Allan ; her Ladyship could not refuse her praises to her son-in-law, who, in the moment that his brother's former prospects were blasted, had proved himself such a generous friend ; and Matilda, delighted at this new *trait* of fraternal affection in Strathallan, communicated that part of the letter to Arbella. Miss Ferrars seemed sincerely rejoiced at Fitzroy's good fortune. "I like that," she said, "that is magnificent—worthy of the stately youth, the lovely Lord of Colonsay ; and as for his *less* worthy brother, take my word for it, he won't share this windsfall with that withered broom-

stick—no, no—now he can dash again and not grow pale with *meditations* upon it ; which, however they might suit the Dean, were by far too dull for the Captain of horse. That he should ever have thought of her ! there was surely some witchery in it : with her age and *vis-age*, the creature must have had Agatha's ring, to deceive him into any thing like the semblance of an attachment : but she has not been yet sufficiently punished. Should I ever, by any chance, meet with him again, let her beware, and not lay that ' flattering unction to her soul,' that I shall spare her a heart-ache, after the many she has caused me. Nay, no reproofs," she continued to Matilda, who, however pleased with her returning chearfulness, was always the first to discourage her levity. " I must and I will tease Miss Hautenville a little."

" You remember she is *not* Miss Hautenville now."

" I do but too well ; and, for that very reason am resolved to plague her : it is but renewing our old flirtation ; and, as for the

dear soul himself, *la douce habitude* is so natural to him, that he will slide into it again, almost without perceiving it."

"I am sure, Arbella, you do not mean what you say."

"If I know myself, Matilda, I certainly do. I know no pleasure so soothing, as to punish those who have had the audacity to encourage similar hopes to my own: reversing the song of Delia, I thus half revenge the perfidy of Spencer, on others; and

"All that I *endure* inflict."

Oh, well-imagined line! in future be my motto!"

Matilda lamented to see how much this fatal passion had altered a character once mild, generous, and amiable. She wished to give her friend some more grateful subject of reflection; for she saw that, after all, it was neglect which most preyed upon the spirits, and hurt the formerly sweet and lively temper of Arbella. She spoke to her of the returning admiration of Sowerby; but was answered with that careless indiffer-

ence, which spoke, either utter repugnance, or hopelessness of success. "Attempt again to be Aspasia to that Diogenes! oh, your humble! as George Spring says, when he means to be witty; if I had your patent, indeed, for converting lovers into friends, there might be some temptation to try *that*; and I should really request it, if I thought it worth while learning how to change gold into lead; but I am equally obliged to you; you are such a good creature—so superior! now that is quite unlike me; I own, I could not bear to see a pug, that had once followed me, in the train of another mistress. Oh, you are all disinterestedness, you live for others."

Matilda did, indeed, live for others; her friendly wishes for Arbella formed but a small portion of the extensive plans of that benevolent heart. In the days of her prosperity she had been adored, in the vicinity of the Rocks, for her judiciously distributed charities; and now that her purse could not afford "to misery," all she wished to give, she turned to Miss Ferrars as to one who

had the power, as well as the will, to relieve it; and it was never without discovering an answering fund of sympathy, in the heart of the good-natured and generous heiress.

"Make me your banker, my Matilda," she said, "it is little, in return for your being my consoler, instructress, and guide."

Matilda, however, availed herself but moderately of her friend's unlimited confidence; preferring the idea of inspiring her with a wish, to enjoy those pure and permanent pleasures, to that of alone receiving the thanks, that in part were due to the liberality of her companion. Arbella soon convinced her, that she only wanted opportunity to be actively, as well as speculatively benevolent. It was in one of the rounds that Matilda took, according to the promise she had given to Lady Strathallan, to visit the poor of Woodlands, that Miss Ferrars, who accompanied her into some of the cottages, was particularly struck with the appearance of one, which had a neatness that might have done honour to a drawing-room;

though every thing in it bore evidently the appearance of the greatest poverty. A numerous family of little boys and girls, were playing round the room. Arbella, who though not really fond of children, was too much of a coquette not to desire to be popular, took very distinguished notice of them ; and having delighted the mother of the family by a number of questions, which it cost her no trouble to make ; she was taking leave, with a handsome present, when struck with the beauty of the youngest of the female children, she stopped to caress her ; and taking her on her knee, promised her a fine book the next time she should see her : the little girl hung down her head, and said, she did not want a book ; "bless me," cried Arbella, in her precipitate manner, "what's the meaning of that? can't the ape read."

"Lord love you, Miss, how should she?" replied the mother, "we have no time to send her to school : indeed we wants our children, as soon as they are big enough, to help ourselves a little to work in the fields,

to go a casing, or at least to take care of the young ones, and carry them about: besides what good would she learn at school, as I say, only to be made rude among boys: if the girls were taught to use their needle, indeed—”

“ And are they not taught to work at the new school ?” said Arbella, with an absent air, and as if in haste to get away.

“ Oh dear, no, Miss ; last week, at the vestry, they did talk of another superscription, I think they call it, that the girls might be teached knitting, and sewing besides ; but, lack-a-day, the poor little parish of Woodlands, could’nt make it out among ’em, though the grocer’s lady did give a pound note : if it had been thought of when Lady Strathallan was here, it might, I reckon, have been brought to bear ; for she was always free hearted, and ready to give her money : I never saw such a prodigious lady.”

“ I wish, indeed, it had occurred to us *then*,” observed Matilda, struck with the utility of the plan.

“We *must* think of this,” said Arbella, with an air of interest; and recovering from her temporary fidget, (which had been occasioned by unexpectedly observing a party of light horse, galloping at a distance); “I myself will be among the first to subscribe; and I am sure I can command names enough, among the young ladies of my acquaintance, to make the little sum we want; and then, my good woman, when they are taught something that you value, won’t you promise me to send your little angels to school; for it is a terrible thing, upon my word- it is, to have them running about like little rabbits, as ignorant as the rocks they climb. Come here, Nanny, my dear,” she continued, “you would like to read, would you not love; well, to-morrow, I will call with the book I promised, and give you the first lesson.”

“Arbella, you will never persevere,” said Matilda; but Arbella was determined to persevere, and actually did so; the subscription for additional instruction, in the more useful parts of needle-work, was soon

filled up to their highest satisfaction; and Arbella, whose active mind always continued to work on whatever object was presented to it, opened to Matilda her more extended views.

"I'll tell you what, Matilda," she said, "you want such a school near the Rocks, as there is at Woodlands: now, though I know what you are going to say, that I am an heiress, and all that, I really have not sufficient command of money to attempt such a thing without assistance; though I should be very happy to promote it; could you not apply to your crazy—I beg your pardon—he shall be your *wise* cousin on this occasion."

"I will," said Matilda, "and to Mr. Sowerby."

"Hum—I have no great hopes of him; between you and I, *Square* Sowerby (as the country folks call him, meaning Squire) is very narrow; you know how he grumbled on being asked to be one of the stewards for the subscription balls at S——; and in little things he is most ridiculous. You remem-

ber his breaking off all correspondence with an old friend and schoolfellow, because he made him pay postage too often for his letters?"

"I do—yet this man is the promoter of almost every charitable scheme around us; besides contributing large sums to various public institutions."

"Indeed! then do you manage him; for to say the truth, I am afraid; though he has reconciled himself to seeing me sometimes, I perceive, since that fatal duel, I have never recovered his good opinion; I fear he thinks nothing of me."

"I rather fear he thinks too much of you—" replied Matilda.

"Well then, since you will have it that he is generous, and tender, and all we wish; do go to your *bourru bienfaisant*, and tell him, like Lady Teazle, I want him to be in a monstrous good humour, for I wish him to lend me a hundred pounds."

"Matilda intended to execute her friend's commission; but before it was in her power to do so, Arbella had an opportunity of

speaking for herself. One morning, on entering the cottage, which belonged to the mother of her little favourite Nanny, she was sorry to find the poor woman keeping her bed with some feverish symptoms, which had long hung over her, and which were occasioned by working too long during the late harvest: Miss Ferrars, however, did not let this prevent her from giving her usual lesson to her little girl; and she was so intent upon her employment, that she did not perceive the entrance of a stranger; this was no other than "Squire Sowerby;" whose benevolence, often secret, though extensive, led him to acquaint himself, personally, with the wants of all the distressed who surrounded him: his knowledge of medicine which he had acquired in the course of his philosophical studies, enabled him often to do good, and to prevent expence; and he now came to renew a simple prescription, which had already benefited his poor patient, when he was struck, as he approached the door, with the figure of Arbella, bending over the little



girl, whom she was teaching to read an easy lesson. The patient sweetness with which she corrected, and endured the various blunders of her little scholar ; and the bright glance of intelligence, and delight, with which she hailed any dawning of improvement, were not lost upon Sowerby ; and he stood for some moments yielding to the pure pleasure this contemplation inspired. Soon recollecting, however, what was due to his age and character, he blushed at thus mysteriously stealing on the occupations of the fair one, like an enamoured boy, watching the steps and actions of his beloved ; and advancing into the room, discovered himself, and said, his eyes beaming with benevolent pleasure, "to see you here thus employed, Miss Ferrars, was, indeed, an unexpected satisfaction ; these are not scenes in which a fine lady delights."

It was impossible for Sowerby to say even a gracious thing, in a perfectly gracious manner ; still Arbella took the compliment as it was meant. " My heart, I trust, is not that

of a fine lady ;" she said looking down, while her cheeks glowed with the long-forgotten pleasure of pleasing.

Mr. Sowerby was melted, struck, delighted. Perhaps he wished to encourage any gleam of right-feeling in the imprudent and giddy Miss Ferrars ; perhaps he thought with the Archbishop of Granada, "*a tout pechà misericorde* ;" especially when the sinner was agreeable, and young, if not extremely beautiful. Certain it is, he never found himself in a more forgiving disposition ; and the amiable Arbella, did not discourage the propensity. She seized this opportunity to mention her plan of a school near the Rocks, to which he gave his most cordial approbation. The numerous consultations these arrangements required, rendered their meetings, at Woodbine Lodge, still more frequent ; and they were, perhaps, additionally pleasing, from the contrast they afforded, to his now solitary home ; where he was no longer welcomed by that gentle being, who seemed to make every place she inhabited a sainted shrine. He took an opportunity

of more particularly questioning the poor woman, at whose cottage they had met; and every thing she said confirmed him in his opinion of Arbella's mildness, sweetness, and perseverance.

"Oh, Sir," she cried, "you have no idea what a good young lady she is; she not only teached my little girl her book, so that she now can read it quite fluidly; but gived my master money when he was bad with the ague; and bought us clothes and firing against Christmas."

Her poor neighbours were no less eloquent in Sowerby's *praises* to Arbella; till she forgot the difference of years, in the glowing benevolence of his heart; and he was piqued by her spirit and generosity, to shew himself even more than usually liberal. "I hate giving my money," he said, as he put down his name to a very large sum; "but you shame me by your munificence. Yet, after all, I doubt not, you find more pleasure in thus laying it out, than in all you ever threw away in feathers and flounces, and gimcracks, hey?"

Arbella accepted the gracious compliment, as it was intended; and even, by degrees, once more accustomed herself to the prospect of becoming mistress of Clif-den-down.

CHAPTER X.

On such a night
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea-banks, and waved her love
To come again to Carthage.

SHAKSPEARE. MERCHANT OF VENICE.

SHORTLY after reading Lady Torrendale's letter, Arbella called upon Matilda at Woodbine Lodge, but her air was so wild, her countenance so pale and exhausted, that her friend anxiously demanded the cause of her evident agitation of spirits. She threw herself into a chair and after asking for a glass of water, "Oh my dear," she exclaimed, "I have had such a shock; no wonder I look pale; the sight of that man gave me such a turn."

"What shock? What man? You look

indeed as if you had seen a ghost," said Matilda, endeavouring to rally her.

"True, true, indeed; 'tis but the ghost of his former self; yet still interesting. The wretch! I hardly knew him. When just returning home from a long walk with dear Sowerby, who you know is a preacher of exercise in all weathers, a dashing carriage and four, drove furiously past us, and a man bowed to me with the greatest *nonchalance*: 'don't you know Captain Fitzroy,' said Sowerby. He must have perceived by the change in my countenance how much I hated him. He was at my aunt's before us; Sowerby took leave at the door, and my first emotion was, to run up and hide myself, till he should be gone; the sight of him is now become so odious to me; but curiosity, or some other devilish motive, restrained me, and I went into the parlour; I found my aunt so triumphant, and so *affairée*, and Miss Hautenville (I won't call her Mrs. Fitzroy) so satisfied, and so detestable; and I have been so sick of their servility, and their nonsense, and his affectation, that I

have at length escaped to steal a quiet half hour with you."

Matilda could not but observe that ill-humor had a great share in this slight and satiric sketch of the family party, and begged her friend to be composed, and to detail the scene as it had happened.

"When I came in," resumed Arbella, after a long pause to take breath, "I found my aunt, who had just laid down her knitting and her spectacles, overwhelming the gentleman with enquiries and compliments, but he put them all aside, and advancing to his delightful bride, he told the creature, the Fitzroy, that the sudden change in his affairs rendered his presence at Strath-Allan necessary; but that he could not think his good fortune complete, without the additional pleasure of her company in the journey; he then continued something in a lower tone, which I suppose was an apology for his previous neglect. She seemed to take it in very good part. Oh when Spencer whispers, 'tis hard not to forgive; and at the end if you could have seen the look she gave me;

may all the—but she is still too happy, is she not, *with him*? My aunt would hardly let him finish what he had to say; but overwhelmed him with a torrent of the most vulgar and impertinent questions: ‘Was that carriage really his? and was he really Lord of Strath-Allan? and did that make him a Lord of the Manor, or a Laird.’ Oh! when I saw the lurking smile, that hovered round those traitorous lips, I could, with such pleasure, have snipt off a little bit of the good lady’s tongue. Spencer, as full as ever of idle business, and important insignificance, had hardly a moment to stay; could hardly be prevailed on to taste the elegant collation that, by this time, was served up; his wife must make her arrangements in less than half an hour, or he must leave her behind. Aye do, my dear Mrs. Fitzroy, said I, and I will help you. Meantime aunt went on, as if determined to set me distracted: ‘do ye go, my dear honorable Mrs. Fitzroy, into your own elegant, honorable new carriage. Didn’t I say it would come to this; and didn’t the fortune-teller say it would come to

this. Now you are indeed the honorable Mrs. Fitzroy, and your husband is the honorable Captain Fitzroy, for he has behaved as I always said he would, like a man of honor. And nobody as I take it (assuming her dreadfully sentimental tone) is truly honorable, but who behaves themselves honorably : then embracing her with tears in her eyes, she ran on, ' and now do ye write to me, and remember, though I scorn to remind you of it, dear Mrs. Fitzroy, I was your good friend in your diversity, and 'twould break my heart if you was to forget me in your influence, for I never loved you so well in my life as I do at this blessed minute. Now for the love of goodness sake, do ye look out at the four beautiful pye-bald horses, as - is prancing and pawing just before the door ; pretty creators ; all your own : I never loved ye so well as this minute.' Well, my dear, he is seriously determined to take his wife away with him, and what can be his intention, it goes even beyond me to discover, though so long accustomed to read all the movements of that vain, weak, wavering

heart. To rusticate with a Hautenville, and live upon love at Strath-Allan would be too ridiculous, even for Spencer Fitzroy."

Matilda found herself as unable as her friend, to solve the difficulty ; and the two young ladies after wearying themselves with conjectures, parted at length, unable to come to any conclusion, but that Captain Fitzroy had always the art of surpassing expectation, however high it might have been raised by his former extravagancies. When Arbella returned home, she found the Fitzroys gone, as she had expected. It was not till some time after, that she learnt, by the laughing and whispering round, the *dénouement* of this strange adventure, and when she thought of it, was no more "in amazement lost."

Scarcely had Strathallan silenced the murmurs of Fitzroy, (who lamented with true pathos to Lady Torrendale, that while his brother by the merest luck in the world had the enjoyment of two fine estates, men of merit, like himself, remained poor and neg-

lected) when the gay capricious Spencer, struck out the bright plan which he resolved that moment to put in execution. Strath-Allan was too retired a spot ever to be an agreeable residence to him; he however, on learning his brother's unexampled generosity, squeezed his hand, muttered some hasty expressions of gratitude, said he would have acted exactly in the same manner, if placed in similar circumstances; and then hastened to take up all the money he could command, upon his new estate, part of which he employed in paying his debts, and the rest in purchasing an equipage, which had made such an impression on Mrs. Stockwell, and Mrs. Fitzroy. On this occasion Lady Torrendale, who had been the only person formerly to listen to her son's complaints, was obliged to own herself satisfied; and Strath-allan, delighted to see contentment once more restored to the domestic groupe, could hardly persuade himself he had been once the object of so much envy and ill-will. "I never intended, my dear fellow," said he to Fitzroy, "so far to avail myself of the favours

of fortune, as to suffer so great a disproportion to exist between us ; you know too well accumulation never was my pleasure ; and that you may find this a relief adequate to all your present exigencies, is my most earnest desire."

From the moment of Spencer's arrival at S—, Mrs. Stockwell, who could hardly believe her eyes, ran out and called from the bottom of the stairs ; " come down, my dear Miss Hautenville — Mrs. Spencer — pooh, Mrs. Fitzroy, I mean ; would you believe it, here's your own dear husband come to see you—come quickly : Lord bless me, if I was ever so surprised in my life."

" Why surprised, Madam ?" said the Lady, who had, by this time, made her appearance to this unexpected summons, and who still maintained her dignity, though the visit was indeed to her equally unexpected and agreeable. What followed has been already detailed by Arbella. Mrs. Fitzroy thought all the sufferings of her life compensated, as the elegant, the animated Spencer handed her into his splendidly blazoned

barouche. The infatuation lasted the whole of their journey to Scotland, nor was it dissipated by the appearance of the mansion at Strath-Allan, though little calculated to inspire cheerful ideas in any but the happy. Mrs. Fitzroy, we may suppose, saw it only with a lover's eye. The house though *un peu délabrée*, was *so* venerable. The trees (though now brown and shedding their leaves) would, she was sure, in spring, burst forth in the most enchanting beauty, and then the winding walks would be *so* delightful with a book, or Fitzroy's arm! This was not exactly the Captain's intention; and she was not quite so much enchanted when, on the third day after his arrival, he mentioned his design of returning to London; but gave no hint of a desire that she should accompany him: "I have no taste," said he, "for rural beauties, but as you, Mrs. Fitzroy, have probably not yet examined half the romantic scenes around, you may wish to have time to explore them more accurately, and give me an account of them—when I return."

Mrs. Fitzroy, who saw through Spencer's

design, which was indeed to keep her at a distance from him, (a design which had made the present of a house and estate in a remote part of Scotland peculiarly acceptable) replied, with some spirit, that she preferred accompanying him wherever he went. "There can be no objection to that now, I suppose," she added.

"None in the world, my dear creature, but that it is impossible," he answered, with the greatest *sang froid*; "I have been obliged to take up all the ready money upon my estate, in the discharge of honorable and necessary demands: you must be aware you cannot appear in the world without *appointments*, such as are suitable to my wife; when it is in my power to give them to you, you shall hear from me; till then, your taste and literature (he dwelt upon this last word with a sneer) can, I am satisfied, make this abode, *un séjour enchanté*, and one of which I shall leave you undisturbed possession."

Mrs. Fitzroy, unable to restrain her indignation, was going to reply, but Spencer begged of her not to be *emportée*, and, po-

lately bowing, and wishing her all health and happiness, stepped into his carriage, and left this disconsolate Ariadne to deplore her sad banishment, while he prepared (sinking, as much as possible, the title of a married man) to assume, once more, the envied character of an *élégant* at every scene of fashionable amusement.

It was not till the evening of the day following that of Spencer's abrupt and cruel departure, that poor Mrs. Fitzroy found courage to walk out, and survey her now solitary domain, which, deprived of the adventitious charms, that Spencer's presence had lent it, now appeared in all its real bleakness and nakedness to her view. Before her was the sea, tossing its foaming billows for ever among dreary and barren rocks; behind the house were lofty mountains, that frowned in terrific and savage grandeur; and though the cascades that burst down their sides, glittering through the various diversities of green, that were mingled in the plantations around, might altogether furnish in the summer a scene of picturesque beauty: the whole view pre-

sented, at the moment, nothing to the forsaken fair one, but the image of solitude, gloom, and despair. The night was dark and dreary ; lurid clouds hung low in the air, and threatened every moment to burst in torrents on her head ; but this was nothing to the storm that raged in Mrs Fitzroy's breast. She was followed by a young Scotch girl, the daughter of the bailiff and his wife, who lived in the house, and had the care of it during the absence of its owners. "Heavens ! what a desolate looking place this is !" she exclaimed, turning, in utter despair to her companion.

" Why yes, my Lady," answered Janet, " it be reckoned an unco pretty place as you shall see."

" I mean forlorn, deserted, girl," reiterated Mrs. Fitzroy, who discovered that Janet mistook the word desolate, for some fine "Southron" term of commendation. " Oh 'tis a dismal sight ! not a neighbour of any distinction for ten miles round ; nothing but a few straggling huts to be seen upon a common."

"Truly, my Lady, 'tis but a strolling sort of a village, yet still Strathallan Castle is sure a bonny wonder; and for the kirk, ayont it has nae peer."

"He may truly say," resumed Mrs. Fitzroy, who had not listened to the latter part of this observation, "that he has left me without appointments?—Pray are you and your father," turning disdainfully to the girl, "the only servants in the house."

"The only servants, my Lady, except Brownie."

"Brownie! who the deuce is Browne?"

"Oh, my Lady, ye manna talk o' the de'il when ye mention Brownie. Ye mun ha mair respect. Indeed! This Mr. Brownie is a very ceremonious gentleman. Do ye na ken he is a spirit?" resumed the girl, with added solemnity; "and what is more remarkable he has kept awa' sin ever ye hae been here. He'd do half the work before I was up, and leave me sixpence too, if I remembered to set his milk for him."

Mrs. Fitzroy now called to mind her little

poetical and black-letter knowledge, which her own distresses had before quite driven away, and remembering Brownie was a guardian sprite, attached to many northern families of distinction, did not doubt but that of Strathallan was included in the honor. She cast a rueful look upon her attendant, who seemed by no means more delighted with the beauty of her mistress, and muttered, "surely my graunie had the second sight of this laidly Lady coming to Strathallan, when she made me pray wi' uplift hands against aw witches and warlocks, and lang-nibbed* things."

"Perfidious, ungrateful Fitzroy!" the Lady at length exclaimed; "are these the vows of eternal love, which you promised to renew beneath the renewing verdure, while the conscious stars, or the nightingale should be the only witnesses to our love?"

"Gif an ye are fond of nightingales, my Lady, ye may hear 'em every night aneath your chamber window."

* Long-nosed

“Indeed! that may, in time, be soothing to my heart-sick grief.”

“Oh then, this place be famous for night-
ingales. Bonny creatures wi’ the horns and
staring eyes, that do cry hoot! hoot! by
night.”

Mrs. Fitzroy shuddered, clasped her hands together, and, for once, with a natural expression, cast up her eyes to heaven, while Janet continued to set forth the beauties of the chamber. “ ‘Tis the room where the last Lady Strathallan died; and sometimes her ghaist do walk about at night. But don’t be frightened, my Lady, ‘tis only on All hallow-e’en or the night she died.”

Such stories amused the time till total darkness came on, and poor Mrs. Fitzroy with no choice but to listen to Janet’s tales of witches, fairies, banshis, or death-lights, or to the mournful sighing (sighing her companion called it) of the wind among the trees, had full time to regret the hour, she exchanged the obsequious attentions, and substantial comforts of Mrs. Stockwell’s fireside,

for the barren privilege of comparing herself by turns to every heroine, ancient and modern, celebrated in mournful story as a victim to the perfidy of man.

CHAP. XI.

“ Matilda” lost ! I woo a sterner bride ;
The armed Bellona calls me to her side :
Harsh is the music of our marriage strains !
It breathes in thunder from the western plains.

MISS SEWARD.

SPENCER was not long returned from his northern excursion, when the papers informed him of Arbella's marriage with Mr. Sowerby. It piqued his vanity ; yet ever equally ready at disguising what he really did feel, or assuming what he did not, he declared, in all companies, his satisfaction at finding, that a girl who had aimed so high, had at length made such a prudent, tolerable, decent sort of a match. Mrs. Stockwell's satisfaction was of a warmer and sincerer nature. Having every cause of discontent re-

moved by her son being, at that time, in pursuit of another lady, she congratulated her niece Arbella with unmingled cordiality, and even went so far as to say that “as she was but young at house-keeping, she would not only be happy to give every assistance and advice in her power, but would (provided dear little Mrs. Sowerby was agreeable) spend the first months of her marriage with her.” This, Arbella, though she continued on perfectly good terms with her aunt, civilly evaded. Not so the advances of her other relations, who were greatly induced, by the wealthy and respectable connexion she had, at length, formed, to overlook her previous slights. Thus divided between the duties she owed her husband, and the attentions required by her new-made friends, Mrs. Sowerby found her good humour and self-consequence return together, and had no longer any room for that gnawing discontent that had wasted her spirits, and preyed upon her peace.

Matilda continued, during the winter, to keep up a regular correspondence with Lady

Strathallan, who flattered her with hopes of seeing her the ensuing summer. To this prospect Miss Melbourne looked forward with serenity, if not with any very lively anticipations of delight; and as the gay season of spring returned, was far from being guilty of that "sullenness against nature," which refuses to appear sensible of its charms. Summer however passed without bringing the promised addition to her society; and as the sporting season approached, Matilda felt sensible she could not hope for the presence of the amazonian dame, till she had taken every hunting lodge in her way that belonged to any one who was of her acquaintance. The letters now began to be less interesting; details of murdered hares, for details of Strathallan's pursuits, his plans and amusements, appeared, to her little friend, but an indifferent exchange. An interval of greater length than ordinary had elapsed since the receipt of the last letter from Lady Strathallan, when Mrs. Sowerby, who was come to spend the morning with her friend, happening to take up the paper which was just come in,

startled the assembled group, by exclaiming, "bless me, this woman is always breaking her neck!" and on an explanation being demanded, read aloud the following paragraph:

"We regret much to have the painful task of announcing an accident, which has excited the most serious alarm in the breast of every person connected with the amiable individual to whom it has arrived. The beautiful Lady Strathallan, who it is well known delights in uniting the crescent of Diana, to the *Ægis* of Minerva, was thrown from her horse, with violence, while in ardent pursuit of a fox, and fractured her arm in two places. The limb was instantly set, but we are sorry to say, a violent fever was the consequence, and all the symptoms since have been unfavourable. Every one who has the honor of this Lady's acquaintance, must unite with us, in ardently hoping, that the world will not be deprived of a character, in whom at once, distress found a friend, taste and pleasure a support, and science a patroness."

"There, now you have it in the flourishing way *that* paper always gives things," added

Mrs. Sowerby, "was it not better as I told you, in two words, that she had broken her neck?"

"No, not quite so bad as that," interrupted Mrs. Melbourne, benevolently ; "she recovered from the effects of a very serious accident before, and I trust this will not be found of such fatal consequence as was at first imagined."

Begging her young friend to excuse her, she, with these words, left the room to address a few lines instantly to Lady Torrendale, to enquire into the exact truth of the report. The Countess did not delay her answer, but on pretence of the intimacy that had subsisted between Matilda and Lady Strathallan, chose to address it to her.

"'Tis true *ma chere petite*," she said, "that her Ladyship's horse chucked her rather impolitely over a six-bar gate ; and it is also true that, instead of thanking him, and saying, 'dat is a good horse, but how will *you* get over?' (as the Frenchman did when in a similar situation, imagining the English hunters were trained to convey their masters

clear over gates in that manner) she lay crying out, with all her might that her arm was broken. However, there is no reason for any immediate fear about our Hippolita ; at least it is by no means impossible but she may recover. Should it turn out differently, my only consolation would be, that a certain dear little friend of mine, might stand a chance of being rewarded according to her merit ; and a certain gentleman, whom her prudery long ago forbade to hope, might at length find the recompence of all his forbearance. But where am I wandering? Is it possible to live in a court, and not to learn the necessary caution, with which it teaches us to disguise our thoughts and feelings?—yes, for, Matilda, I was not *bred* in a court ; and now, while giving way to the fond flatteries of a too friendly and susceptible heart, run the risk of incurring your grave looks and rebukes in return. Oh spare them this time, and—*should it really be so*, allow me to console his mind, with the idea that you will not always be inexorable.”

“ Shocked at the mixture of unfeeling levity

and insincerity this epistle betrayed, Matilda could yet scarcely forbear a smile, at the Countess's still supposing her so much the dupe of her arts, as to give into a snare so gross ; one that supposed a conduct so unlike the whole tenor of that held by the refined, the humane Strathallan. " Ah ! little does he suspect," she said, " the commission her Ladyship insinuates she has received from him. Insinuates for no visible purpose, but the gratuitous pleasure of making me odious and contemptible in the eyes of all, to whom she would show the unworthy avowal she solicits ! "

As she had not originally addressed Lady Torrendale, Matilda did not conceive an answer to this strange epistle necessary ; but understanding that Lady Strathallan's head was not affected by her present illness, she dispatched a letter full of the real tenderness and sympathy, she felt for her situation ; and entreating her, if it were only by the hand of an amanuensis, to send her a line soon, respecting her state of health. The letter she received by return of post, in the hand-

writing of her Ladyship's woman, though more grateful and affectionate than usual, was of a most gloomy cast. It appeared intended as a kind of farewell. In it Lady Strathallan seemed fully sensible of her danger. At the beginning of the week that succeeded the eventful one, in which Lady Strathallan's accident had been first announced, Matilda happening to take up the newspaper, turned very pale, and handed it, in silence, to her mother. " 'Tis over, then," exclaimed Mrs. Melbourne, " poor Lady Strathallan has paid with her life, the forfeit of her unfeminine temerity, and Strathallan is free!"

" Still Pensero, my little lonely brain," said Arbella, as, several days after the last mournful intelligence, she stole upon Matilda's solitary stroll in her garden; " if Strathallan himself were gone instead of his lady, you could not be more sad; hang melancholy reflections. You must know Papa Sowerby is gone to a county meeting, and I am come to billet myself upon you, and intend to be as gay as he is grave, till his return; indeed

you should go out with your mother; she met me and sent me home to enliven you."

" You are always welcome, my Arbella, but who can be gay, that reflects on the frail tenure by which we hold all that makes life desirable. What a little space it is since poor Lady Strathallan's lot appeared the most enviable! possessed of youth, health, riches, and united to the most amiable of men."

" Ah there it comes! little self must mix with the best characters; the most amiable of men! well, *Le plus amiable des hommes se consolera*, we must suppose, or if he will not of himself we must help him."

" Forgive me, Arbella, but really my spirits are not in a tone to keep pace with your —"

" Levity, you would have added; forgive me, Matilda, but really my desire to see you placed as high as your merit deserves, sometimes makes me overstep the bounds of propriety. Besides, I was put into this train of thought by seeing the most amiable of men just now."

“ Seeing him, where, when? how did he come?”

“ On the back of a griffin, my dear, to be sure; so valiant a Knight of Spain could chuse no more common conveyance. There, I said I could bring back the rosy colour into her cheeks.”

“ Are you sure it was Lord Strathallan?”

“ Sure that it was either he or his wraith, as the Scotch call it; but I am almost certain a wraith could not have looked half so handsome. I will not positively say he spoke to me, he rather flashed on me like a sun-beam, as your Saph's favourite Scotch prose-poet has it, while I was walking among our woods at Clifden-down. You may be certain it was a sun-beam from a very dark cloud. It seemed hastening rapidly away; and to say the truth, I thought it must have been here by this time, so came to have a little gossip with you, and to hear about the proposals, and when ——”

“ Oh Arbella, why will you imagine him capable of a conduct that would at once rob me of the only mournful delight I ever per-

mitted myself to taste? esteem for his character."

" Because, my dear, I thought such conduct might make said mournful delight a very lively delight, by changing esteem for his character into love for himself."

" His presence in Derbyshire might be necessary," resumed Matilda, thoughtfully. " Now I recollect, poor Lady Strathallan had desired her remains might be placed by those of her father (to whom she had ever conducted herself with exemplary duty) at Vinesbury. Business might have induced him to proceed to Woodlands, but he would never, no never seek to force himself into my presence before time had ——"

" Very probably, my dear, very probably," replied Arbella, coolly, " you know best; but as I perceive sunbeam is advancing due west, and rests at this moment at your garden door, I must beg leave to be off, and postpone, to another opportunity, the pleasure of passing the day with you."

" Stay, stay, Arbella," exclaimed Matilda, convulsively grasping her hand.

"Not for the world, my dear; am I not a wife and a lover, and do I not know the value of a tender uninterrupted *tête-a-tête*?"

Matilda made another effort to detain her. "No, no," exclaimed her lively friend, "it shall never be said that the witty and agreeable Mrs. Sowerby, a title I begin to value as much as I once did the honourable, was ever Madame De Trop. So you must act 'She would and She would not,' as well as you can, without a prompter." She darted through the gate as she finished this sentence; and even had she delayed, Matilda was no longer in a state to entreat her stay. Strathallan stood before her.

Hardly justified in his own eyes, he could scarcely endure the surprise and displeasure that appeared in her's; without design or wish, the day before, to break in upon her solitude, a tormenting idea had haunted his mind from the moment he found himself near her abode, with renewed and redoubled force. He had long, long been obliged to be silent, with respect to the sentiments she had for-

merly inspired. He had an enemy, busy, restless, assiduous, that had the advantage of being ever near her; one who had a hand to offer, when he, alas! durst not even own to himself his heart was her's; he feared to think of the influence that constant importunity, opposed to involuntary neglect might, in his absence, and without his knowledge, have acquired; he feared to think of the force of the united claims of blood and fond affection, on a heart like Matilda's. These, and a thousand other arguments he was prepared to address her with, in excuse of his unexpected intrusion; but, once in her presence, a secret feeling told him, the mention of such suspicions would only add to his offence; and he was content to await, in silence, the decree, which should declare, whether her coldness proceeded from displeasure or indifference.

“ His heart unhushed, although his lips were mute.”

She reproached him for the little regard to her feelings this unexpected intrusion shewed;

but with these reproaches was mingled a degree of tenderness that inspired Strathallan with a hope they were not meant to convey.

“ You teach me what I ought to be ; yet how difficult it is to remember it, and remain with you ! Believe me, I harboured not a thought of offending that purity, of hurting that sensibility, on which I build my highest hopes of happiness ; 'twas but to reclaim my interest, too long dormant, in that heart, to tell you mine is yours, and to entreat you not to forget me in the moment I am free again to love you, that I ventured on this imprudent—this, perhaps, blameable step. You yourself could not have a deeper sense, a greater desire, to relieve the sufferings of the unfortunate being, to whose virtues we both did justice, than I felt during every hour she was with me ; and the most soothing thought I experience is, from the grateful consciousness she expressed at her latest hour, of the devotion of my life to her. We were sacrificed to the interested views of our parents ; with another she might have been happier. It cannot, surely, offend you, to say

that your name was one of the subjects on which she seemed to dwell with the greatest pleasure. True to the last to her prevailing passion, she expressed herself in acknowledgment of your conduct, as having relieved her mind, and saved her PRIDE, in a manner the most unassumingly noble, flattering, and generous."

Matilda's tears flowed at this tribute to her virtues, paid by a rival whom she had endeavoured, with such success, to convert into a friend. Strathallan seized this moment of softness to request an intercourse, by letter, till time should remove the barrier that still existed between them. "Is this small boon," he said, "too much for me to ask, for you to grant?" He watched Matilda's lips, and hailed the answer in the relenting smile, that hovered round them once more. Softened by this concession, she began to think she had shewn, perhaps, an unnecessary severity. All these variations of sentiment, though hardly distinguished by herself, were marked by the penetrating eye of Strathallan with the fondest rapture. The cold suspicions that had dark-

ened all his prospects, vanished at this dawn of returning love. There was no need of words to assure him he still saw his own Matilda, artless, as she was lovely, fearful, as kind. He pleaded their approaching parting, as an excuse for the long forbidden pleasure of expressing his sentiments. In that very scene, amid those fair flowery arboars, where she had once so coldly checked the fond admiration she inspired, he renewed the confession of a passion, now authorized by heaven and by her. All the tenderness of his nature so long repressed, or diverted into another channel, flowed at that moment in its charming and genial current. Equally formed to feel and to inspire love, it was only when yielding, without reserve, to the influence of that gentle, generous passion, that Strathallan could appear in all his power, resistless as amiable. The silence of his mistress was as eloquent as the language which painted his love; there, every delightful feeling, only heightened by the veil her delicacy still interposed, could be by him

but too distinctly traced ; their hearts were, for a moment fully disclosed to each other ; and they mutually exchanged in secret, but deep felt rapture, the conscious vow that made their future fortunes one. The world —Sir Harold—every thing was forgot—she lived but to gaze upon Strathallan, to repeat, he is mine for ever, ever mine ! Her lover reminded her of her promise to write to him.

“ I must waste a year in insipid idleness, or still more irksome business. But while I am believed far distant from you, you will know my heart and soul are here ; farewell ! then most beloved—till —”

“ Till then I'll think of you.”

“ My own Matilda !”

“ My dear Strathallan !”

Enchanting sounds ! but they were lost to him for whom they were intended ; breathed in too low a tone, by his charmer's timid tenderness, for even the ear of love to catch them ; unless, indeed, he guessed them by the fondness with which her eyes overflowed.

“ Surely you are now content, Strathallan,”

resumed Matilda, with a bewitching smile; “ why then prolong this painful moment, for indeed, indeed we must part.”

“ I go then!” he exclaimed, as with a lightened heart he bade farewell; “ but oh! may every power to whom innocence and loveliness are dear, watch over my treasure till I return—and I will think of this parting as an hour more sweet and sacred than that in which many lovers meet.” As he spoke, he raised Matilda’s hand to his lips, a freedom which, for the first time, during their long intimacy, he permitted himself. What was then her surprise, to perceive his countenance, so lately beaming with tender transport, suddenly overcast with the gloom of resentment and despair; as, hastily renouncing the hand till now so dear, he exclaimed, “ Is it thus you would again deceive me!”

It was the ring, placed as if the symbol of her engagement to Sir Harold Melbourne; an engagement which the inscription seemed but too fatally to verify, that had struck his eye, and dashed his late glowing hopes to the ground. Matilda felt she had been allowed

to taste a moment of happiness, never, perhaps, to be succeeded by another. In the transport of that hour the lovers had forgot the malignant destiny, which was not weary yet of persecuting them. She shuddered when she recalled the emotion, the fatal foreboding with which she had received this ill-omened gift. A gift of which her cousin was too apt to remind her, with expressions that shewed it was the tacit compact, on which the life and safety of the best-beloved of her heart still depended. It was vain to remind him of his former obligations to Strathallan; of his having once declared, when that obligation was recent, his enmity to his preserver was at an end. Alas ! was it possible to reason with madness, to combat unbridled love? " 'Tis true," she said, in a voice scarcely articulate, from hopeless dejection, " while that unhappy being lives, I dare not venture to unite myself to any other."

But it was useless to renew her former arguments with one, who never admitted them to be of any force. Strathallan treated

her fears with slight, with resentment, even with contempt: but finding he had only offended where he had failed to convince, he soon resumed all the softness, which she ever found so much more dangerous than his anger, and adjured her, by their past tenderness, by their present joys, not to defer his happiness to such a distant, such an indefinite period, nor to let evils so imaginary, trouble their promised bliss.

“Strathallan,” resumed Matilda, mournfully, “they are *not* imaginary. Seek not to change my resolution,” she continued, “for it is unalterable.—Cruel, cruel wayward fate!”

Strathallan stood gazing on her for a moment, as if expecting she would have added something to the sentence it cost her such anguish to pronounce, and then broke from her in silent desperation; but soon returning, “One word more Matilda: how cruel is your imagined kindness?—to what a life do you condemn me, from a false idea of preserving it from a possible danger—say—will,

you not change this harsh, this unnecessary determination?"

"I will not, I cannot," she replied, in a low but steady voice; for, in the moment that he was most dear to her, she felt, in its most fatal force, the dreadful threat of which her ring reminded her.

"You will not?" she was silent—he paused, as if struck with some new and important idea. His mind seemed engrossed by it. "Then farewell, Matilda!"

A nemotion, like presentiment, induced her to think she had been, perhaps, too hasty. Distracted, irresolute, she felt an inclination to recal him, to consult if no other course could possibly be taken, consistent with his safety: but he was gone, and as her strained eyes followed the last glimpse of his form, she felt that her heart, that her whole being went with it.

But a few hours before this meeting, Strathallan had congratulated himself, that from the nature of the service in which he was engaged, his exertions would be immediately

demanded in the field: and that he could charm the languor of expectation, by knowing himself to be near her, and perhaps by some interviews which, however rare, would shorten, by the magic of anticipation and recollection, the gloomy period that must elapse before he could call her wholly his. Upon the cruel blow given to his hopes, inaction seemed worse than death; and being informed that he could obtain a command which would require his presence abroad, he directly took the necessary steps to facilitate an arrangement for that purpose, though, at the time, one extremely disadvantageous to him. Repenting already of the abrupt and precipitate manner in which he had parted from Matilda, he wrote to inform her of his resolution; and only requested, in return for his devoted submission, that she would not withdraw the promise she had given him, of her correspondence, but sometimes express that generous sympathy in his fortunes, which alone could make him, for a few moments, forget, that happiness had been once more

presented to his grasp, perhaps to elude it for ever.

“ You will not have a Verdinha to detain you this time ; so we may hope, unless ill-fate pursue us, for regular communications and a happy return.” Such had been the half sneering, half tender farewell of Lady Torrendale. Strathallan started—the forgotten name, for a moment, brought a glow still richer to his cheek, and distant scenes crowded to his remembrance with vivid and painful force. But he had just lost—had renounced, a dearer than Verdinha—and the remark, that curiosity perhaps had dictated; was, the next moment, banished from his mind.

CHAP. XII.

L, in atto di morir lieto e vivace,
Dir parea : s'apre il ciel io vado in pace.
D'un bel pallore ha il bianco volto asperso
Come a' gigli sariān miste viole
E gli occhi al cielo affisa :—in questa forma
Passa la bella donna, e par che dorma.

TASSO.—GERUSALEMME LIBERATA.

MATILDA's attention was soon called from her own sorrows, to those of her unhappy cousin; for such was her wayward fate, that duty, compassion, every sentiment, urged her to give up her time and thoughts to him, who had most cruelly blasted all her hopes of happiness. His situation now called more imperiously than ever for her active pity; for it was evident that Lady Julia, long the victim of illness and calamity, drooped from day to day, and as evident, that the ill-

fated Sir Harold drooped with her. He himself appeared sensible of his gradual decline, and contemplated it with a feeling of melancholy satisfaction. "Why should you wish," he would say to Mrs. Melbourne and Matilda, "to prolong my days? My life was attached to hers—every thought, every feeling of it interwoven with her existence. Ask the blasted and sapless branch, if it can bloom when dissevered from its parent tree? No—as we have lived, let us be laid to rest together."

His kind relatives, however, judged otherwise; and thought that however violent the shock of grief might be at first, the removal of an object that afforded a perpetual irritation to his mental malady, was the only chance Sir Harold had of cure.

He sometimes would flatter himself with hopes that his beloved parent betrayed symptoms of amendment. At length Lady Julia's weakness increased so much that she was completely confined to her bed: it was then Sir Harold gave up all expectations that her life could be much prolonged, and from that

moment he never quitted her : the nights he spent in praying by her : that she could not join him in prayer, was the circumstance for which he expressed the most constant regret. " Do not think," he would say, " that I fear she has ought to repent of. No, but how blest were that pure soul, to be able once again to prefer its humble wishes, and to know that they were accepted."

At length the constant desire of his heart was accomplished. One night, performing his now almost hopeless supplication, he knelt beside his mother ; the sinking lamp and increasing gloom around, scarcely allowed him to distinguish her fading form ; while contemplating the lovely ruin time had made, his anxiety for her future welfare, added to the wonted fervency of his mental orison. " Oh gracious power," he cried, in hopeless anguish, " I ask not her life—grant her but one moment the returning light of her soul ; let her but know she is accepted—hear my prayers, not for myself they rise, they are for *her*—let not my mother

pass in darkness, let her not leave me in utter despair."

At this moment a beam of intelligence illuminated the fine features of Lady Julia. She turned her eyes upon the agonized countenance of her son, who still kneeling, gazed anxiously, yet fearfully, to watch the returning ray. That son who had ever loved her with more than filial reverence—who had been firm to her, when forsaken by the world—had sacrificed health, fortune, reason, to her cause. "My dear son," she said, in a calm tone of voice, "I have long been very ill; and yet have been strangely insensible to my danger. I now feel its extent. I have but a few moments to live, join me then in employing those moments to implore forgiveness for the past—if I dare ask it, to hope for mercy."

An instant before, Sir Harold did not venture even to wish for more than what he now hailed with transport—his mother's restored reason. Yet, with this restoration a faint hope now rose in his breast, that she

might not yet be lost to him. But the hope which flattered for a moment, soon sunk into despair; as he marked the death-like hue which occupied the place of the former clear paleness of her features. Lady Julia repeated her earnest and solemn entreaty, that he would join her in the last act of her life.

“ And must you be torn from me,” cried Sir Harold, “ at that moment when consciousness is restored, must life be denied to our prayers?—life, now so doubly precious !”

Lady Julia did not answer him—absorbed in the concerns of a superior state, the world, its interests, its sorrows, even its affections receded from her sight.

Struck with awe and admiration at the divine expression which now illuminated her countenance; “ Oh stay,” he cried, “ and let me, breathing my soul in orisons like yours, with you, as I have lived, expire.” His wish seemed granted—for as he uttered it, Lady Julia tenderly pressing the hand she still retained, resigned a soul purified by

suffering, and long fitted to be received within the mansions of eternal rest: and her unhappy son, overcome by the anxieties, the vigils, the fears, and even the hopes he had alternately experienced, sunk by her side into insensibility; deep, motionless, and apparently complete as her own.

CHAP. XIII.

Véggio, ed ódo, ed inténdo : ch' áncor viva,
 Dì si lontáno a' sòspir miéi risponde.
 Deh ! perch' innárrzi témpo ti consume ?
 Mi dices con pietáte : a che pax vérsi
 Dagli óechi tristì un doloroso fume ?
 Di me non pianger tu.

PETRARCA.

THE first symptoms of recovery that Sir Harold evinced, appeared in the gratitude he expressed towards his active and sympathising friends, who had scarcely ever quitted him during the late period of suffering: and who were still unwilling to leave him, dreading the effects of the first transports of his grief; its violence shewed itself, however, only in a fixt and immoveable determination not to quit the body till the hour of twelve had passed; an hour at which he appeared to have still some confused idea that

his late loved parent might desire his presence.

In anxious and mournful suspense, Mrs. Melbourne and her daughter waited, in another apartment, the expiration of that awful period. How much was their minds relieved to see Sir Harold, the moment it was elapsed, re-enter the room, with a comparatively cheerful countenance. Adverting with sensibility, but composure and resignation to the past, he affectionately thanked his cousins for all their kindness to him; but intreated them to consider their health, and not to risk it any longer by needless solicitude; he promised to be careful of his own, and requested they would let him soon see them again. "You find me," he added, (as if desirous to the utmost, of calming their apprehensions,) "not only satisfied but thankful; I feel indeed there are still some pleasures worth living for."

A little comforted by these assurances, though not exactly comprehending the purport of the last sentence, Mrs. and Miss Melbourne returned to Woodbine Lodge,

where they kept Julia a kind of prisoner, lest the affecting secret should reach her. They did not find, during the ensuing melancholy week, any reason to entertain apprehensions that Sir Harold's feelings would lead him into any extravagance. They continued, however, their affectionate attentions, well-knowing how much the presence of a friend, however intimate, is a restraint upon the destructive ebullitions of sorrow, without preventing its more soothing indulgence. Still they remarked that it was seldom they could see Sir Harold. He now absented himself more than ever, and frequently his domestics were at a loss to direct where he was to be found. His compassionate visitors were too well accustomed to his peculiarities to be much alarmed by this conduct, till their attention was roused by an unexpected and affecting communication.

One evening the ladies had called, and received the usual answer, from the servants : Observing the old gardener look up from his work, and shake his head significantly, they could not forbear asking him after his master.

"Master's in a bad way, sure enough," he replied sorrowfully; "indeed Miss I wish you and Madam would come and sit a little with him of an evening now and then."

"We never find him at home," said Matilda; overlooking, in her anxiety for her cousin's welfare, the oddity and familiaricity of the old man's manner.

"No ma'am, that's the worst of it—and at first we thought it no harm to let'n have his way. I knew that he spent his days in the thick woods, and I thought he might as well have his fancy; only sometimes I followed him when it began to get damp, and begged of him to go home; but when he would turn home, and when I used to think I had him safe in the drawing-room, and lit the candles and every thing to make it look a little chearful and comfortable to him; he'd disappear, and for a long time we could not guess where he used to go; and where do you think we found him at last? in the vault under the old chapel—he was sitting there talking away, as if he had somebody to answer him; and when I begged of'n to leave it, he said it was cruel to force

him away, for that he never was so happy as when he was there, and if he left her she would so grieve. Now who *she* was, that he was talking of, is best known unto himself, unless it was my late lady, yet surely her death was a blessing; so I take it 'tis some new fantasmagory or other, as is disturbing of his honor's poor head."

" And is he there now?" enquired Matilda, in trembling agitation.

" Yes, madam, and will stay there till the great clock have gone twelve."

" I will go to him," she exclaimed, " the voice of a friend might yet recal him."

" Oh no!" said Mrs. Melbourne, while she trembled at an idea that had not before struck her, " go not to that vault."

But Matilda, alive only to the active energies of friendship, was for once deaf even to her mother's voice; and had already advanced several paces towards the chapel, accompanied by the gardener, whom she forced, unwillingly, to lead the way. Having procured lighted torches, to descend into the vault, she soon arrived at the mournful scene

of her cousin's devotion. At the door of the vault the old man again paused. "Indeed you had better not go in Miss," he said, alarmed at what he had done, which had produced in Matilda an exertion so much beyond any he meant to have required of her. "'Tis such a cold damp place you may catch your death, and you can do no mortal good; for as to thinking of moving *him* before the hour is expired, you might as well think to move a rock."

"Proceed," said Matilda, in a firm voice, though her heart was wrung. The servant was forced to yield. The door was opened. Leaning, in the silence of filial anguish, over a coffin, which bore the name of Melbourne, they discovered the unfortunate Sir Harold. His air, his attitude, his piercing grief, the relation which he bore to the object of his regret, all struck the trembling Matilda, for the first time, with a heart-breaking recollection. She now guessed the reason of her mother's parting entreaty, and almost feared her own courage would fail her in executing the task she had undertaken. Equally un-

able to advance, or to recede, she stood, for a moment, absorbed in these painful contemplations ; till the reflection, that the object now before her, had a still greater claim to compassion than herself, arose to arm her with resolution to go through with her benevolent purpose.

The night-air blew her white garments to the wind, and her fine eyes were raised as in prayer for her cousin : he directed his towards her ; “Angel of consolation,” he cried, “come you then sooner to my prayers ?” But turning from her, with a look of grief and disappointment, “Ah no,” he said, “a fairer, not a dearer spirit is there.”

“Oh, that I could be a spirit of peace to you,” said Matilda, in a voice of the tenderest compassion. “Dear Sir Harold, suffer me to tear you from this spot. Why will you distress your friends—all those who love you, by thus indulging a fatal grief ?”

“Have I friends? no, she who loved me is here ; you, Matilda, never loved me—you have told me so; why, then, should I quit the living for the dead? That night, when

she appeared to you to have left us for ever ; that night, in which I watched by her mortal remains, she returned to me, beaming in all that angelic beauty with which she was adorned before oppression crushed her ; and she promised to see me each night at that hour, if my affection remained unchanged ; if I suffered not its devotion to be disturbed by sharing it with any outward object. I have complied. Buried in retirement, I have not even suffered you to share my soul with her ; and she has, in return, rewarded me with interviews which have repaid—”

Here Matilda, interrupting him, endeavoured to reason him out of this new illusion ; but in vain. “ Do you think,” he replied, looking at her with disdain, “ that the attachment of lovers, of two mortals united by chance, by vanity, or caprice, is to be supposed to survive the tomb ; and yet that an affection, the earliest, the purest, the most ardent, cannot resist its power ? No, my mother,” he continued, throwing himself upon the mournful pall, “ not even death itself shall part us more.”

"Will you not hear me?" exclaimed the distressd Matilda. "I, too, have wept in agony over a parent's cold remains; a parent, whose remains these walls enclose. I will weep with you, if you will give me but a hope, that at some future time, your soul may admit of consolation. Then do not, oh, do not, if you ever valued my peace, give way to such destructive grief."

"You have wept?" Sir Harold repeated, looking on her with an air of incredulity. Poor innocent! do you think you loved your parent with a love like mine?" But perceiving that the words she had uttered were indeed from her heart, and that her tears flowed involuntarily, and in great abundance, the reality of her emotion produced an instantaneous change in his manner and feelings. "Oh, spare these tears," he said, "I am not worthy of them; do they, indeed, fall for me? I will obey them. Matilda wishes it, I will obey." Rising, he followed her from this scene of desolation; thus showing the empire she still maintained over his mind, and the habitual submission

be paid, even in his wildest or most gloomy hours, to any wish she sincerely expressed.

Having extorted from him a promise that he would not revisit the vault till she saw him again, she no longer opposed herself to her mother's anxious entreaty; and was taking leave, when he said to her, with a smile, " You think now you have preserved me from the effects of a vision, which you weakly imagine might be injurious to me; but you are mistaken; you have only changed the scene from that where it usually appears. At twelve, when you are gone, she will issue from that door," (pointing to the one which led to the apartments where Lady Julia Mel bourne formerly lived,) " and bless me with her conversation. It now gives me added delight, as she has all the faculties, which in life were suspended, restored in tensfold lustre; but what is strange," he added, whispering, " is, that she retains her dread of the hour of twelve, and could not spend it without my society. She tells me it was necessary she should be withdrawn from me for a space, to be restored to the full exer-

cise of her powers, but that she will soon return and—" he paused for a moment, then rapidly resumed, with an expression of exulting confidence, "she will return, and live with me for ever. You see I have prepared all things for her reception."

The apartment in which they conversed had indeed been adorned with studied elegance, since the death of Lady Julia Melbourne ; and every day Sir Harold employed himself in making some addition of whatever was most pleasing to the eye, or gratifying to the taste and fancy ; then, surveying with complacency the silent scene, he would often repeat, " 'Twas thus she loved it living—her presence now alone is wanting—nor shall it be wanting long."

This infatuation was not made to last. Ever the sport of some new illusion, Sir Harold Melbourne contrived, (without infringing the promise given to his relations, of not returning to the vaults), to find out for himself another equally melancholy occupation. He determined to erect a magnificent mausoleum to his mother ; to which,

as soon as it was finished, her remains were to be removed. The spot was marked out ; it was one already planted with yew, cypress, willow, and many other trees of mournful shade. In the midst of a circular space, that had been cleared by Sir Harold's direction, he resolved the monument should be erected. In that part of his grounds, and in that alone, Sir Harold might be seen every morning, before sun-rise, encouraging his workmen, and assisting, with his own hands, in the prosecution of the work. The first time Mrs. Melbourne found him surrounded by his plans and marbles, she endeavoured to dissuade him from an undertaking so calculated to revive every painful sensation ; she remonstrated against his being himself employed in forwarding it ; but counsel or reproof he rejected, with equal disdain. "Kings have found pleasure in the occupation," he said, "and what king ever could boast a parent like mine ? Guide of my youth—indulgent friend of my maturer years—in infancy my guard, support, consoler ; when she instructed, her words were wisdom, when she approved, her looks were love."

How detach him from an employment, calculated only to nourish the most melancholy and fatal ideas? How draw off his attention from it, when the unhappy man remained under a firm conviction, that his lost parent appeared to him every night to urge the completion of the work! What charm could again soothe his spirits to peace!—For some time he had lost his usual pleasure in music; yet Matilda determined once more to try its effect on him.

One night, at the hour in which he usually expected his awful visitant, his fair friend, who had engaged him in an animated conversation, took up her harp, and, without apparent premeditation, striking some chords, began a song, to which he had often, in former days, listened with delight; then, as if inspired by her own exertions, she continued, for some time, to shew, in different airs, the powers and pathos she possessed. Sir Harold listened, in breathless attention; the hour passed on, and for that night he seemed to have forgot the vision that generally engrossed him. When she found the

power she had thus obtained, she habituated herself to repeat, at the same hour, the same experiment. Its success was beyond her expectations. Sir Harold, dead to every other pleasure, could still listen to that voice; and it seemed to restore his cheerfulness, if not his health. He now could talk with composure of quitting the Rocks, the scene of all his sorrows; and his former passion for travelling seemed to have revived again. Yet still true to the principle that now influenced all his actions, he managed to unite this newly returned taste, with the desire he had to render the tribute of affection he constantly meditated for his mother, every way worthy of her. "He would defer its completion," he said, "till he had himself procured the marbles and bas-reliefs abroad, that were destined to form the pillars, and to adorn the compartments of her tomb.

CHAP. XIV.

Fare thee well, thou first and fairest!
Fare thee well, thou best and dearest!
Thine be every joy and treasure,
Peace, enjoyment, love, and pleasure.

BURNS

SIR Harold, since his taste for travelling had returned, was become very inquisitive respecting the affairs of the continent; and as every thing yielded before the warm creations of his fancy, the peace of Europe was soon settled. Italy was restored among its rightful owners, and travelling was rendered equally commodious and secure. To see how far the public accounts promised in time to realize these sanguine plans, Matilda was

constantly required to read him the news of the day; and the uneasiness and constraint she endured, when so employed, became every moment more insupportable. Whenever the name of Strathallan met her eye; that name which spoke such volumes to her heart; that name, which seemed to stand apart from all others, and to irradiate, with the single light of the characters which composed it, the page in which it was found; she was obliged to assume a composure the most foreign to her feelings, to check the blush, to curb the sigh; if possible, even to restrain the start of sudden anguish when his danger was the theme; for still, as she read, the eyes of her cousin were fixed on her, with a scrutiny so severe, that she dreaded his penetration, and the starts of phrenzy that were too often the consequence of it.

Yet this terror was again subdued and melted into pity, when she listened to the delusions in which her ill-fated relative indulged; and which seemed to promise him years of variety and amusement, while his

exhausted health refused to ratify the flattering hope.

"Your songs ever delighted me, my lovely cousin," he said, "but when I have been in Italy, I will bring you back so much music from that land of witchery and Syren strains, that you will be forced to own the powers of your voice lay dormant till then. From Venice, the light song of the Gondolier, and the evening chaunt of the enamoured maid of Palestrina's opposing coast, shall woo your taste, when she sings, to the responsive voice of her love, upon the Laguna, the strains of the Bard of Salerno. 'Tis thus Matilda's voice shall charm me to return—it is thus, whiem I am gone, she will watch and weep for me. From Sicily, the song of the mariner, or the rich harmonies that float along the bay of Naples and its proud and beauteous city. Whatever is sweet, whatever is lovely, I will lay at your feet; that you may improve it by your talents, that you may endear it by your charms; but what shall I bring *her*?" he resumed, with a fearful and altered look, "round whom

every one once pressed eager to render homage, for whom I would brave death, would wander through the world? What is all I can offer, all she can receive?—a tomb.”—Then turning his eyes with renewed interest on Matilda, “To your mother,” he said, I entrust, during my absence, the guardianship of my treasure; and I need not fear your inconstancy,” he continued, with a glance of conscious security and satisfaction at the fatal ring.

An acuteness and intelligence, together with a wonderful degree of memory, was always mingled with his wanderings; a circumstance, which made it impossible, on any subject in which his heart was concerned, to hope, for a moment, to lull or deceive his vigilance. The idea of visiting Italy, which Sir Harold had been prevented, by the peculiar circumstances attending his travels, from viewing in any other than a cursory and partial manner before, was now his most favourite speculation. Matilda only replied to the plans he communicated to her, by a look of tender apprehension and pity, as she

cast her eyes on *his* flushed cheek and emaciated form, who talked of traversing continents, when his existence appeared, from day to day, as if, by miracle, prolonged. Of this he soon himself became fully sensible.

One evening, at the close of an air he had particularly desired to hear, he continued gazing for some moments upon the beautiful animation of her countenance, never so lovely as when she sung, and then earnestly exclaimed, "Thus listening, thus beholding, surely I ought not to complain."

"You think so now, but on your return from Italy, you will find much to correct in my wood-notes wild ;" said Matilda, affecting a gaiety and ease she did not feel, to conceal how much she was confused by the suddenness and warmth of his address.

He shook his head—"Matilda," he resumed with solemn emphasis, "I shall never go to Italy; this sylvan scene contains my mother's remains, and will contain mine. It

was decreed, that in this spot we both should fall." Then, as if endeavouring more completely to collect his thoughts, " My lovely cousin," he said, " I had something to say to you, before my final preparations for a long, long separation. I have, perhaps, committed many errors, but nothing weighs so heavy on my heart as my conduct to you. It has been unjust, it has been cruel; but remember, I was lost to myself before I even knew your charms. Honour was my idol. The whisper, that it was attainted in the very sanctuary where I had fondly conceived it enshrined, overthrew that reason, it had not power to convince; converted that affection all to bitterness, which it was unable to destroy. Then over my already suffering heart came too, too powerful love. I do not excuse myself. What did I wish? I had only misery, reason impaired, health blasted, hopes destroyed, to wed you to—and these I would have had you share—but patience—yet a few brief moments, and the black thread I would have interwoven in the golden tissue of your

days, will break—love, joy, and youth, will woo you to possess each pleasure, which I have alone opposed. I rejoice in your approaching bliss. Yet, will you forgive me, cousin, the contradiction of a heart too fondly doating. I go to the grave with added bitterness, from the thought you will then be Strathallan's. I envy his felicity, and still, were it in my power—”.

“ Do not anticipate,” said Matilda, who had not heard him for some time past indulge in this melancholy strain, “ Life, I trust, may yet have its value for you and—”

“ Never so much as at this moment,” he replied, bending forward as he uttered these words with fervent and encreasing energy—“ Oh! looking thus, to die were still unequalled bliss !” He fixed his eyes on that adored countenance, and seemed to drink, in every beauty, happiness restored. At length his gaze became less earnest—still it was turned with tenderness on her—still his eyes sought hers, and seemed to express a languid pleasure, ‘in a presence so beloved.

Gradually, and gently, they closed, as if unwilling to shut out those beams of beauty, on which they so long had lived; and at length letting fall the hand he had fondly clasped, he, in a sigh, soft, deep and tremulous, expired.

CHAP. XV.

Se mai senti spirarti sul volto
Lieve fiato, che lento s'aggiri
Di': son questi gli estremi sospiri
Del mio fido che muore per me.
Al mio spirto dal seno disciolto
La memoria di tanti martiri
Sarà dolce con questa mercè.

METASTASIO. LA CLEMENZA DI TITO.

ON examining Sir Harold's papers, two articles in his will more particularly demanded the attention of Mrs. and Miss Melbourne. By the first, he bequeathed to Matilda the whole of his personal property, which amounted to about ten thousand pounds, as a small return, he said, for the attention she had bestowed upon his sister, and the hours of delight he himself had known in her society. He mentioned her merits and amiable qualities in the highest terms; and then added

a wish, that Julia Melbourne might spend the three first months of her mourning at the Rocks, under the care of her most respected relative, to whose guardianship he, in the most solemn manner, consigned her. To spend any time, however short, entirely at the Rocks, was a circumstance the most painful to the feelings of his relations, but they were determined to observe the last requests of the amiable, unhappy being they had just lost, as religiously as a law. A sealed paper, addressed to Mrs. Melbourne, more fully explained his reasons for expressing this desire, by which he seemed to extend his gentle, yet cruel tyranny, even beyond the grave.

"Before you will have opened this writing, the Rocks will be my Julia's," he said, "I wish her ever to consider that scene as her home, and to be known and beloved in the spot she has inherited. Where she lives, you will be—for, has not Matilda given me her most solemn promise, never to forsake her. But another, and a stronger reason, urges me to desire she may make no delay in taking possession of her inheritance. It is her right;

but recollect she is a female infant; alone, unprotected, an orphan, doubly an orphan, from her tenderest years; mystery and slander have rested on them. Believe the last dying dictates of a brother's anxious love, a brother who, during life, ever watched her with the fondest affection; and think not that the wanderings of the head have, in this instance, misled the heart. Relations I have; distant relatives whom I esteem not. But what then? they can sting, though incapable of reflecting honour on us. Me they have traduced; they might more fatally traduce her. Haste and anticipate them, before they can afford you the shadow of disquietude. Claim they have none; but who can answer for the attempts of grasping avarice? To you, my dearest cousin, I continue to recommend my only treasure. Possessed of riches, beauty, and a sensibility deep and alarming, how can I hope she will escape the various dangers that will surround her. My best, my only security is in confiding her to you; but what precaution can ensure happiness? The sage boasts that the goods of fortune are all that

fortune's self can rob him of? But are not peace, virtue, reason, almost equally in the power of fate?"

On this mournful reflection, the best comment was his own wayward lot. Behold then Matilda, once more reinstated in the scene that had cradled her infancy; but oh, how different from the artless child of solitude! who peeping, for the first time, with fawn-like timidity from behind her native rocks, seemed hardly to know that there existed a world, in which misfortune, cruelty, and deceit, were at every moment to be found. No two persons could be more dissimilar to each other, than she was to her former self. Yet had Matilda rather gained than lost by the alteration. Sorrow, in distinguishing, had added beauties to her mind as well as countenance. She had known the passions, but it was to resist them with courage; had become acquainted with affliction, but it was to receive it with resignation. The playful, almost infantine innocence and grace of early youth, were exchanged for a dignity, a firmness, a deep, but constantly repressed sen-

sibility, that lent its impression to all her features, its majestic and touching beauties to her gestures, air, and countenance. In person and mind she was now all the fondest lover could wish, or the most anxious parent hope to see accomplished; purified from every girlish foible that could diminish the lustre and effect of so many united excellencies.

Surrounded by objects that perpetually reminded her of the unhappy friend, whose death alone could set her free, in every dusky walk and twisted bower she seemed to meet, in pensive musings, *his* pallid shade, whose life had been devoted to her idea. His spirit seemed to breathe along the groves — the rocky seat, the winding, silent stream, now turbid from neglect; the altar, still strewed with inscriptions of his cherished passion, all spoke to her pitying heart; all seemed, in plaintive murmurs, to recall the memory of him who had loved so long, so well; still these were not her constant thoughts — sometimes the image of Strathallan would cross her solitary walk, invested in all that

radiant glory, beaming with all that blooming beauty, in which her partial tender love had so often anticipated his return; and then he passed

“ Before her fancy’s eye,
Like some delightful vision of the soul,
To soothe, not trouble it !”

But stern reality too oft disturbed these fond illusions; a few months had entirely changed the face of her destiny; and, when she reflected how soon the tie that bound her to Sir Harold had been broken after his departure, she was ready, with fretful impatience, to accuse her lover of cruelty, of precipitancy; then, soon repenting, “ let me not blame thee, Strathallan !” she cried, “ my evil star prevailed even in that fatal hour when I refused your love ! Oh surely, surely ‘tis decreed none of our wretched, our divided family should ever taste of happiness ! should it prevail once more !” She remembered, with horror, the wish one of his letters had expressed, that a glorious death might terminate his sufferings at once; “ if it should

come now—now that life is, in his eyes, I hope most valuable! let me endure," she exclaimed, " in trembling anguish, each various torture yet reserved by fate—but spare, Oh heaven, the dear presumptuous one!—the loved, the too dearly, fondly loved offender!"

In the habits of sincere and ardent piety, that Matilda had ever cultivated, she now found her best consolation and support. With parents the most deeply impressed by all the sublime truths of religion, she had been left upon this head, very much to the workings of her own mind; and this, which in a disposition less excellent, might have been of dangerous consequence, with her only tended to improve her knowledge, and to confirm her faith.

Mr. Melbourne, from the peculiarity of his habits, and latterly from his state of health, had been, in general, too negligent of the forms enjoined by religion. Accustomed to see the Creator in all his works, God was in his heart and in his thoughts; but, naturally silent and contemplative, he seldom

gave words to the overflowings of a truly pious and benevolent nature. Mrs. Melbourne on the contrary, while scrupulously attentive to the observances it requires, was, from a different cause, habituated to check every expression of that conviction, which was the rule and the reward of all her actions. Educated in the bosom of a gay, mixed society, accustomed to touch, with the light spear of ridicule, every thing that passed its comprehension, or warred with its pursuits, a modest silence, and constant refusal of all controversy, had, alone preserved her own belief from shipwreck, in a scene, where venturing to defend it, might have exposed it to the overpowering, though not convincing, arms of learning, eloquence, and dangerous sophistry united. But that world which had spared her principles, had a little influenced her taste; and, by perhaps too great an excess of refinement, she was apt to view, with alarm, as symptoms of enthusiasm, affectation, or hypocrisy, the least mention of that sweet hope, the least allusion to those sacred truths, which the works of the inspired writers con-

tain, except when authorized by the express purpose of the moment, when introduced at the hour of worship, thanksgiving, and prayer. To Matilda, whose ardent mind was ever demanding more than the present scene can afford, the knowledge of these opinions often occasioned a painful constraint. She had sought, by turns, with her younger friends, to communicate the feelings of an ingenuous and grateful spirit; but then Clara, she considered, professed an erring faith; and Arabella, when they were first acquainted, professed no faith at all. Thrown back to the resources of her own mind, she had read, she had reflected, she had decided. And that belief, which solitude had, in infancy a little tinctured with local superstition, had brightened into the clearest, purest flame of rational piety. One favourite, though fanciful conviction of all her former illusions she still fondly cherished. It is that which inculcates the belief of guardian spirits, appointed to assist the virtuous, and convey them, with honour and safety, through the terrors and temptations of their mortal career.

On this subject Mrs. Melbourne rallied her most unmercifully ; and thought herself sure of the assistance of Mrs. Sowerby, who, though no longer an *esprit fort*, three thousand a-year had rendered more than ever (in the opinion of the world) a *bel-esprit*. “ Yes,” she said, “ Matilda will not deny it ; when she was yet but a very little lady, she pleased herself with imagining every grot and hill, the seat of an aërial power ; with fancying the air itself inhabited by invisible but beneficent beings, busily employed in providing for our happiness, or defending us against every possible danger. She has wept at finding my tales of sylphs and genii were not true, and to this day, she believes that a certain noble youth, who has all our wishes, is followed on the Continent by an angel “ *tout à lui*,” who will guide him, like the Duke of Marlborough, to all sorts of honor and glory —is it not so, Matilda ?”

“ I do not see,” replied the young Lady, raising up her modest eyes, “ what there is absurd, or fantastic in the belief ; other na-

tions trust in guardian angels of kingdoms ; and why should not—”

“ Others !” interrupted Mr. Sowerby with more asperity than he had lately allowed himself to show ; “ those, perhaps, whose national religion, frivolous and false as their manners, only deserves to be what our immortal Dryden, in the plan of his noble poem, wished to make it, the basis of our national mythology.”

“ Come, come, Monsieur Anti-gallican,” exclaimed his wife, playfully silencing him, “ I had some thoughts of joining with you, but a passage I read last night, pleased me so much, that it has almost made me a convert to Matilda’s opinion. It is the farewell of an amiable wife, whose name, I am sorry, is not preserved, expressing the last wishes of a heart, which, even approaching death, could not render indifferent to the object of its fond affections. Her husband was an officer, who had a command in Spain ; she wishes for the power of following him, as a protecting spirit, when released from her present suffering frame. Arbella then read from

a collection of letters, the passage she had alluded to.

“ To be present at all the adventures to which human life is exposed : to administer slumber to thine eye-lids, in the agonies of a fever ; to cover thy face in the day of battle ; and go with thee, a guardian angel, incapable of wound or pain, where I have longed to attend thee when a weak, a fearful woman. Oh, best of men ! I cannot figure to myself a greater happiness than—”

Arbella had read thus far, when the audible sobs of Matilda, and the streaming tears that she could no longer suppress, shewed her friend, that she had dwelt too long on a subject so painfully interesting. Yet though it led to anticipations that too often harrowed her feelings, it was only when the conversation could be thus brought round to the object of her secret meditations, that Matilda could take any interest in it. At other times, even in the midst of those animated discussions of which she used to be the charm and soul, her vacant look and wandering eye, shewed that her thoughts were with him, who was far dis-

tant from her sight, but ever present to her heart. Though she had written to inform him of the late melancholy events, and to express the half uttered wish of modest, fearful love, that duty might not long detain him from her, he was, now, alas! no longer master to declare when its call should cease.

As Strathallan had made his father the confidant of all that latterly passed between him and Matilda, his Lordship took an early opportunity of expressing, by letter to her, the complete satisfaction he now felt in the prospect of their union.

"In his former choice," he said, "my son sacrificed the dearest affections of his heart to my interest, my peace, and honor. It is time I should, in my turn, consider his wishes. They are indeed become my own; and experience has taught me justly to value the blessing I now venture, Madam, to hope at your hands. Do not reproach yourself for the past. Strathallan, with his apparent mildness, is like his father, sometimes impetuous in his resolutions, and must consent to abide by their consequences. I have only to

request that if you are not very angry with him, you will continue sometimes to cheer the poor wanderer, by epistolary communications. I shall have a pleasure in forwarding them, together with our own, as there is now, I flatter myself, but one wish respecting Strathallan's return, in our re-united circle, from Mrs. Melbourne and her fair daughter, to Emilia, Laura, and

Your very faithful and obedient,
TORRENDALE.³

Though still unable to discover, that resemblance between Lord Torrendale and his son, which his Lordship flattered himself existed, Matilda was delighted with the familiar, and friendly tone in which this letter was written; one which he had indeed taken the greatest pains to assume, in the place of his usually formal manner, and which, it may be observed, did not yet sit entirely easy on him. She accepted, with eagerness, his proposal of conveying her letters to Strathallan; flattering herself, that by keeping up a correspondence with his fa-

mily, she should receive both more frequent, and more copious intelligence, respecting him. She little imagined that she was only unthinkingly giving into a snare laid for her by Lady Torrendale, who had herself suggested to her Lord this proposal, with the secret intention of revenging herself for Matilda's want of confidence, when she proposed her insidious question, on the supposed danger of Lady Strathallan. How little she was deserving of trust, or how unbecoming it would have been in Matilda to place it in her, the Countess never paused to consider. Miss Melbourne's not replying to that letter, she vowed she would never forgive. "I would have contributed to the *denoiement* of her novel again," she said, "as I endeavoured to forward its progress before; but since she thinks she can carry on her plans independently of me, we will see if I cannot manage a little arrangement without consulting her. It is no matter how long Strathallan remains in the Peninsula, there are others besides him to support the name of Torrendale. Pursuant to these laudable resolutions, her Ladyship,

under pretence of saving Lord Torrendale the trouble of making up the packets, suppressed his letter to his son (which he had shewn her) containing an account of Sir Harold's death, and only transmitted one of inferior importance which had been written some days before ; Matilda's letter also she destroyed ; resolved to do the same good office, by all that should arrive from her, at Fitzroy square. She allowed some of Strathallan's to be sent to the Rocks for fear Miss Melbourne might otherwise suspect some treachery, and have recourse to other means of hearing from him. "Now Miss Melbourne will be gay," Emily would say, "for to-day she expects a letter from—"

Matilda smiled ; and no longer, as in former times, defended herself from the accusation. The letter arrived. It was full of tenderness ; still she thought it strange that his reviving hopes were never touched upon by Strathallan ; but soon consoled herself with the reflections Lady Torrendale foresaw she would make, on the difficulty and irregularity of communication with the army

abroad. Again, and again, she wrote. Many were the days, the weeks of heart-sick anxiety she often endured, while public rumour was all that reached her ear; and while spring passed away in this miserable mauner, she sometimes sighed, " Oh Strathallan, can even a future hour of tranquillity and happiness with thee, repay the long-protracted sufferings of a life of lingering suspense? were he but returned—returned, though war and toil had obscured those dazzling and captivating distinctions that biassed, perhaps, my youthful choice; were he but safe, my heart would rest contented, nor ask my eyes if aught without were changed!" Sometimes his letters a little calmed her mind. Towards the close of summer, after an interval of more than usual length she opened with eager joy a packet from Strathallan; but it was far from conveying the balm to her heart, the former ones had done. It spoke of an expected engagement; it complained of her silence—her neglect.

Absorbed in more important cares, Matilda scarcely remarked that it did not acknow-

ledge what she last had written. Still then, "upon the hazard of a die," hung all her hopes of future happiness. She could not contemplate the prospect before her with steadiness; she only saw Strathallan too brave, herself too tender, to survive it. If for a moment, she ventured to indulge the idea that, this one peril past, he might be restored the sooner to her wishes, she soon feared again, with the solicitude of a lover, that it was impossible those wishes, so strong, so ardent, could be granted; and she would often exclaim, "no, I never shall see him again. I love him too much. I never shall see him more."

Observing how much this situation affected her daughter's health, Mrs. Melbourne proposed a temporary absence from the Rocks; as the best means of diverting her mind from continually dwelling on one painful topic. Mrs. Carlyle, who had been continued, by Sir Harold's recommendation, in her place about Julia, promised in every thing where only care and affection were demanded, to be the most able representative of Mrs.

Melbourne, and some dispute respecting the Baronet's disposal of his property, in favor of Matilda, rendered this journey as necessary, as desirable. The relation to whom Sir Harold had alluded, in his letter to Mrs. Melbourne, and who was not in England at the time of the Baronet's decease, had immediately, on his return, taken advantage of his cousin's occasional alienations of mind, to question the validity of his will, and though Mrs. Melbourne was certain she could produce incontestible proof of his being in full possession of his powers of intellect, at the time he made the disposition which excited so much contest and envy, she did not chuse to neglect, in its commencement, a circumstance that might occasion her, or her daughter, future vexation.

During the short period that Mrs. and Miss Melbourne staid in town, Emily was, of course, to remain with Julia; as the only answer Matilda had received to her letter, requesting to know Lady Torrendale's pleasure respecting her daughter, on the removal of the family to the Rocks, was to desire the

change might make no alteration in their former arrangement. "Keep her, my dear Miss Melbourne; she cannot be better than with you. The same instructors that attend Miss J. Melbourne from * * * * are quite sufficient for her, till the time of finishing masters arrives."

Such were the replies of the dissipated Countess, who seemed now as well pleased with a pretext to get rid of all domestic trouble, as she had formerly been with an excuse for taking her daughter out with her every where. Matilda viewed the preparations for her journey with that torpid indifference, that indolence which arise from despair, that sickness of the mind which made her dislike the scene in which she lived, and yet feel a strange reluctance to the effort required to leave it; in these moments, the company of Sappho was more grateful to her than that of the livelier Arbella. The romantic enthusiasm of the poetess gave her an appearance of still greater sensibility than she really possessed; it also inclined her more readily to discuss those fearful and

lofty topics, which now alone were pleasing to Matilda, as being identified in her mind with the image of Strathallan. "Shall I repeat to you, my friend, the little poem I composed upon the subject of our last night's conversation," said Sappho, (after a long *tête-a-tête* silence, which had arisen during a visit of Matilda's to her at the village, which, like the ancient seat that adjoined it, bore the name of the Rocks); Lady Lyndhurst has not yet seen it—you shall have the first copy."

"Is it about Spain?" enquired Matilda, with an absent look.

Matilda, who had been hitherto accustomed to welcome with the most winning affability every production of Sappho's muse, enquired, with an absent look, "Is it about Spain?"

"It is. The subject is its vile usurper, and the contrasting glories of your hero, my hero, every body's hero. I do not mean your lover: but while I repeat it you may think of him, or dream of him, which ever you like best."

THE HOPE OF IBERIA.

With tresses wild, by golden Tagus' side,
 Stood a bright maid, in sorrow's graceful pride;
 Her slender form hung o'er the wave below,
 Her voice, sonorous, spoke of war and woe,
 In her dark eye, a thousand passions rolled,
 While thus her heart's impassioned griefs she told.

“ A thousand wrongs this bleeding breast have torn,
 Stabbed by domestic guile, by foreign force,
 The Goth, the Moor, on wings of rapine borne,
 By turns have track'd their desolating course;
 But now ! Oh, knighthood's shame, oh, ruin worse,
 Than every pictured woe remembrance brings,
 No princely victor reigns—a splendid curse !
 A traitor's breath the tyrant mandate wings,
 And treason treads the courts, and mocks the voice of
 kings.”

She ceased—a gathering vapour slowly rolled,
 In curling rings along the river-side,
 The mist dispersed, a voice her heart consoled,
 She bowed, and knew the genius of the tide.

“ Weep not Iberia, soon shall knighthood's pride,
 Wipe the foul stain that blots thy burning brow,
 Thy bold avenger comes ! Whate'er betide,
 To thy racked state of after weal or woe,
 Maid of the dauntless eye ! my faithful wave shall
 show.”

Then, oh ! when first the rapt Sicilian spies,
 (And yields to famed Morgana * praise, how due !)
 On the smooth waters, towers and fanes arise ;
 And arches now of gold, now purple hue,
 Melting, in gay confusion, to the view ;
 While, with delight, immingles soft surprise,
 Knows he the joy the blest Iberia knew,
 When the clear mirror of the crystal wave,
 In bright prophetic tints, her brighter glories gave ?

And first, directed by the Western star,
 Whose beams, beneath the waters, trembling play,
 She hails a lovely island, distant far ;
 Its emerald beauties mild, the fount of day,
 Illumines with its last, its parting ray.
 There, sheathed in glittering panoply of war,
 Her champion first, her wondering eyes survey ;
 Bright round his crest, young Hope, and Fortune
 smile,
 And urge their favoured chief, son of the verdant isle.

A warrior chief he seemed ; but soon the brand,
 Drawn but for justice, conquering but to save ;
 To olive-branch was changed, at heaven's command,
 And flowers, and blossoms, fruit and perfumes
 gave ;

* The phænomenon called in Calabria, the Castles of the Fairy Morgana.

As when 'twas given to Israel's Priest to wave,
 The sterile rod—with almonds bloomed the wand.
 Fair, like the youthful spring, with blossoms brave,
 Such mighty change, shall sad Iberia see,
 Conqueror in virtue's cause ! when cheered, when
 raised by thee !

With speechless extacy, the virgin sighed,
 Closed her bright eyes, as if no longer waking;
 Oh, for a long, long night of sleep, she cried,
 Time, still unfelt, his slow departure taking;
 Till I salute the day-spring from on high,
 The loved, the rising star of dawning liberty.

“ Hark !” exclaimed Matilda, who would scarcely give Sappho time to finish reading her verses, “ what was it I heard then ?—a shout !—Oh, surely yes ?—and hark ! 'tis there again !”

“ And listen to the bells,” cried Sappho, “ surely there must be some reason for their bursting forth in that merry peal ! Some news is perhaps arrived this moment—a great advantage gained over the enemy !”

They were not kept long in suspence, for at this moment, the entrance of one of Sappho's officious neighbours ; an old lady, who

always liked to be the first with any good news, informed them of the victory gained over the French at Salamanca, which was just announced to the delighted inhabitants of the village, with the entrance of the herald of the morning's intelligence. "They say now," she pursued, "that the Spaniards will soon drive the French quite out of their country; and that they may thank us for that, as for every thing else."

"I said so," exclaimed Sappho; her countenance kindling with sudden enthusiasm, while she lifted, in pious gratitude, her tearful eye to heaven. "He lives but to conquer, and conquers to save!" and, as she spoke, the animated expression of her face and figure, which, for a moment, assimilated her to one of the prophetic, tuneful daughters of Antiquity, afforded the most striking contrast to the pale drooping form of Matilda; in whom one sole idea checked the current of rejoicing, and turned every smiling prospect into gloom."

"If you were to have seen the postman,"

continued 'the good lady,' as he passed through the village, to go on to S***; and how the little urchins hallooed when they saw he had a branch of laurel in his cap; and then they must all be gathering laurel too—and such shouting—you must have heard it—hark! they are at it again!"

Sappho, who perceived her friend's emotion was much increased by the presence of a stranger, soon contrived, under some pretext, to disengage herself from her; and then endeavoured, in the most gentle and soothing manner, to reason with the lovely mourner. "Why should Lord Strathallan's danger be greater," she said; "only because he is the most amiable, and most beloved of men? In a very short time, perhaps to-morrow, all the particulars may reach us—Heavens!" she continued, observing Matilda heard her, cold and trembling, and unable to derive any consolation; almost unable to understand the import of the words that were addressed to her; "Could you be worse, if report had com-

mitted that fatal error it did on the occasion of a former engagement, in which he bore a part?"

" Could I be worse?" Matilda repeated, in a hollow tone, while she started with horror at the idea suggested, " The error that then gave my heart the first throb of pain for Strathallan; would now, if repeated, soon make it cease to beat."

CHAP. XVI.

Come then ! again your laurel-wreaths prepare !
Bring every sweetest flower that scents the air !
In festive troops around the victor throng ;
And greet the triumph as it sweeps along !

POEM OF BONAPARTE.

IT was come—it was gone—that eventful day, dreaded, with such anxiety, by the trembling Matilda—wished for with such heroic ardour by Strathallan—escaped, escaped, with glory, from its carnage. Was he happy? Had public success left his heart nothing more to desire? The preparations for war, the tumult of battle might have drowned, for a moment, the murmurs of that heart; but, in the intervals of the mighty struggle of an empire, it flew back, with trembling fondness to Matilda. Conceiving his ser-

vices could, for a short period, be dispensed with, he determined, (giving up the pleasure of entering the capital of Spain with the army that had so nobly avenged her), to obtain permission to absent himself, that he might judge, by his own eyes, if there were yet, beyond the proud rewards of valour, any object worth living for. Matilda's unaccountable silence struck his heart, by turns, with every painful suspicion. Fears for her health—doubts of her fidelity, alternately racked his mind. Yet, when he thought of the whole tenor of her conduct, he was ready to reproach himself for sully-ing the image of that angel brightness en-shrined in his heart, with even the momen-tary imputation of inconstancy.

Landed in England, his impatience to be-hold her was such, that, without seeing Lord and Lady Terrendale, he immediately pro-ceeded into Derbyshire, after dispatching to Matilda a letter, informing her of the day she might expect his arrival; but not even Matilda could conceive the speed that love imparted to the wanderer's approach. It

was with "wonder, great as her content," that she learnt his arrival at Woodlands ; within four miles of her abode ! She wished that others might share in her delight, and had sketched the plan of rural festivity that was to mark the day. She now thought she had hardly time to hasten her few and simple preparations. What could delay Strathallan ? Had they still pangs to suffer, before they at length should meet ? Obliged to pass through the village of Woodlands before he reached the residence of his mistress, for once the good, the benevolent Strathallan, had urged his horses with such excessive speed, that when he arrived near his family mansion, beyond which the small country town of Woodlands lay, he would have been obliged to allow them a little rest, even if they had not been stopped by the delighted villagers, who, on perceiving their dear Lord, surrounded him with acclamations and welcomes. He thought his small stock of patience would fail, when they entreated he would alight and take refreshment ; but when he perceived the intended compliment de-

signed by these honest people, it was not in his nature to let them see how much their ill-timed gratitude distressed him. Passing by the house, he observed the steps lined, on both sides, with young damsels, clad in white, and crowned with garlands. A pair of colours exquisitely worked, and surmounted with laurel, adorned the centre. Strathallan cast an anxious hurried glance around; a faint hope lurked at his heart, that, among those wild and blooming flowers, he should discover the lovely rose on which all his affections were fixed. But no, these colours were an offering from the young maids of the village, to the hero, whom they so justly and proudly claimed as their own. They had heard that the colours of the regiment led by Lord Strathallan, after having been the rallying point for actions the most brilliant, had been taken and re-taken, pierced through with bullets, torn into stripes, and, at length, reduced to a fragment, glorious indeed; but which, while preserved, with anxious care, as a trophy of the past, could hardly lead to future scenes

of danger. They, therefore, had resolved, to employ that industry, of which they had so lately been taught the value by his charming Matilda, in fabricating a pair of state colours, which they entreated him to accept, as a memorial of the gratitude and affection of every class over which his goodness had extended. The youngest of the country girls took from her head her chaplet, which was so ingeniously contrived as to change into a nosegay, when she presented it to him : it had some heath flowers, mingled with laurel, myrtles, and roses ; and, in a few words, which she addressed to his Lordship, with a pretty hesitation, and a modest blush, she expressed a hope, of the assembled group, that the rose, the laurel and myrtle, which were to crown his days, would never make him quite forget the wild heath of their native mountain, nor the place he held in the hearts of the simple inhabitants. Strathallan, with a grace, which was only his, thanked the assembled group ; and, saluting the pretty speaker, assured her, that their interests were interwoven with the

dearest wishes of his soul; and that he should always recal, with gratitude, this testimony of their regard. The cheeks of his pretty rosebud now glowed with the radiance of the full expanded flower, at this unexpected compliment, while pride, shame, and fear, alternately struggled in her innocent breast; but Strathallan telling her he considered her as the representative of the kind and long-regretted friends, whose remembrance showed the goodness of their hearts, added, he trusted she would forgive his thus confirming the promise he had made them, that they should ever retain the nearest and dearest place in his memory.

“ Sure you are not going yet, my Lord,” said some of the country people, “ we are to have lights and bonfires, and what not, by and bye.”

“ Aye, sure your honor,” interrupted a woman, “ we intended, by the blessing of God, to set the whole village in one conflagration.”

“ I hope not—I think we are surrounded by fires enough already,” replied his Lord.

ship gallantly, as he glanced his eyes round the fairer part of the assembly; and then disguising, as much as he could, his impatience to break from them, "I am obliged," he said, "to proceed farther to-night, my worthy friends, but I hope you will not let that prevent you from drinking my health as if I was still among you."

"Bless your kind heart! you were always the same. Something like my old Lord—yet still, so much more affable, as I may say."

"Oh! husband," continued the woman who had just spoken, "I never can help thinking how sad we were three years agone, and better; and if it had so been, that our dear young Lord had really not returned, then—"

"Why then, if he had not, dame," replied a hoary-headed sire, sagaciously shaking his head, "he would not have been among us now—but don't let's think of sorrow, now my Lord has given us wherewithal to be joyful."

With some difficulty Strathallan disengaged himself from the well-meaning group, who

still surrounded him with huzzas, congratulations, and blessings ; the men pressing round him, the children anxious to obtain a sight of him ; and the women still more desirous to be distinguished by a nod, or a glance of approbation. At first his rustic friends would not suffer the horses to be restored to the carriage, but insisted upon drawing him, at least through the village. But Strathallan at length succeeded in dissuading them from this mark of attachment, distressing to his feelings, though meant by them as a proof of the heart-warm wishes, with which they once again welcomed their beloved warrior to his native land. And then, with a hand to each, and a kindly breathed prayer for the happiness of hearts so honest, simple, and affectionate, he bade them, for a while, farewell ; and urging his people to redoubled speed, was soon out of sight of the villagers, leaving them at a loss which most to admire, the sensibility, the spirit, or liberality, of their darling hero.

All these unavoidable delays had conspired to render Strathallan later than he

intended, in meeting his beloved ; but after having given so much to others, he now felt that he owed something to his own feelings, and to himself. The kind master, the benefactor, and friend, had enjoyed their turn ; now the man and the lover resumed their place in his heart. "In a few moments I shall see her," he whispered to himself, as the carriage drove down a winding path, overhung by a lofty steep, which led to Woodbine Lodge. "In a few moments I shall read in those sweet eyes the joys which overflows her heart ; for even Sir Harold shall not prevent her from conceding one hour to rapture unconstrained." Alas ! how happy had he been if he had known the long-dreaded Sir Harold was no more.

He now drove rapidly below a romantic ridge of mountains, and the pure breezes that blew from their healthy summits came to his sense, with added fragrance, as it brought with it the remembrance of many an enchanted ramble with Matilda. At length he reached the humble scene where last he had left the spotless mistress of his affections,

under the care of her mother, and his heart beat higher as he approached,

“The lovely, lowly dwelling.”

How did remembered joys rush at this moment, with redoubled force, to his mind ! how did the noisy plaudits of assembled numbers, the voice of welcome, though pleasing, the voice of gratitude, though sweet, sink before the anticipated praises of blushing, faithful love ! But the greater his preceding elevation of spirit, the higher the wild tumultuous throb of hope, had arisen in his bosom, the more sudden and chill struck the damp of disappointment, on finding the beloved spot deserted ; the garden run wild, and no one to reply to his anxious enquiries respecting the absence of those, whose residence had alone converted it into a paradise. Though a thousand reasons might render a change of residence eligible, Strathallan’s vivid imagination, instantly created a presentiment of danger to his love, of misfortune to Matilda. At length, he perceived an old man, moving home slowly

under the weight of wood he had to carry; and, hastening to him, asked in a voice, scarcely intelligible from emotion, where Matilda then was?

“At the Rocks, at her own home again,” replied the old churl, with an appearance of surly impatience at the interruption.

“The Rocks—and where is, where is Mrs. Melbourne?”

“Gone to live with her daughter to be sure.”

“To live with her daughter—to live with her—Oh! tell me,” Strathallan continued, gasping for breath, while all his former dark presentiments returned with redoubled force, but his informant was already gone; and, resolved to clear up all his doubts at once, he, instead of returning to his carriage, hastily walked on toward the Rocks.

On approaching the rustic hamlet that adjoined the ancient and romantic dwelling of the Melbourne family, he was surprised to remark, as at Woodlands, the signs of rejoicing, and every appearance of a village festival. Anxious to know the reason of this

entertainment, which he could not avoid connecting, in idea, with Matilda, he asked a woman, among the by-standers, the cause of this universal holiday; and being recognized by her, was answered by numerous blessings and congratulations, intermingled with praises of Matilda.

“ What ! your honor don’t know that its my young Lady at the Rocks have ordered it all !—she do like to see folks chearful and happy ; and she do a power of good besides; God bless her Ladyship.”

What a thrill did these ominous sounds convey !—What a welcome for Strathallan to his native land ! the title he had heard, though commonly enough given by rustics to their superiors, struck his mind (already prepossessed with the idea of the probable success of Sir Harold,) with all the force of conviction. From that moment all seemed darkness and confusion ; unable to arrange his thoughts, he lived but to the one torturing idea, that Matilda was another’s—irrevocably another’s ; and the very means his gentle mistress had taken to celebrate her innocent love

for him, proved to his distempered imagination a snare that convinced him of her devotion to a different object : "Perfidious woman!" he cried, "in the moment that, determined to sacrifice life itself to your dear idea, I could scarce pronounce an agonized farewell, you coolly sent me to a distance from you, that you might fulfil, uninterrupted by a single plaint of mine, the base, the impious vow you made."

The jealousy of years, a jealousy that had never been wholly laid asleep, spoke in these hasty exclamations of Strathallan, purposely kept in ignorance, by his mother-in-law, of Sir Harold's death; and believing Matilda silent, when she had repeatedly written to assure him of her unchanging love, the present circumstances rather confirmed than created the conviction of her inconstancy. Still some demon seemed to urge him not to return till he had viewed the scene that contained his heart's lost treasure; and, as he approached it, an object struck his eye that would have been sufficient to have dispelled prepossessions not so deep-rooted as his.

The lovely Matilda was walking arm-in-arm with her mother, upon the lawn; her features illuminated with pleasure at the remembrance of happiness she had dispensed, and beaming with a softer joy at the anticipation of that which was in store for herself. As she turned to Mrs. Melbonne the name of Strathallan often hovered on her lips, and a half-uttered wish, of which he was the subject, seemed to employ her thoughts, when a joyful cry, from that Lady, announced that the object of all their solicitude was in sight. Hastily advancing towards him, it is impossible to describe the mingled dignity and grace with which the tender, the lofty Aspasia, as she welcomed the young warrior to his home, blended the grateful thanksgiving she uttered for his return, with the name of hero and of son!

The mist that had obscured them, fell in an instant, from the eyes of Strathallan. Ashamed of his precipitancy, he now rejoiced that it was concealed from Matilda; he paused not to retrace the steps that led to

his error, was it not already sufficiently punished? his suspense, though short, included an age of suffering.

Throughout the evening the moments flew with that delighted swiftness which may be imagined in the intercourse of hearts so fond, so long divided. Strathallan pressed his suit with a vehemence he had never dared to use before. He endeavoured to engage Mrs. Melbourne to second his arguments against all Matilda's objections to an early day; and even made use of his sister's persuasions to determine her resolution.—“ Consider, my best love, that life is short, and now it trembles on the wing of danger! Can I again leave England without calling you mine?”

A thousand endearing, yet fearful ideas were recalled to Matilda's mind by this appeal: she scorned to torture with suspense the bosom of her noble lover; and her eyes had said, even before her words confirmed it, “ Strathallan, I am yours!”

CHAP. XVII.

— Those whom Love cements in holy faith,
And equal transport, free as nature live,
Disdaining fear—What is the world to them,
It's pomp, its pleasure, and its nonsense all,
Who in each other clasp whatever fair
High fancy forms, or lavish hearts can wish ?

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

Though formed by nature, and refined by art,
With charms to win, and sense to fix the heart,
Content in shades obscure to waste her life,
A hidden beauty and a country wife !

TICKEL.

THOUGH Mrs. Melbourne declared it impossible farther to delay her London journey, Strathallan entreated that if the scene of his felicity must be changed, the duration of his uncertainty might not be prolonged. He easily prevailed on his father to join in this request, and a most pressing and oblig-

ing letter from Lord Torrendale, accompanied by one from the Countess, insisting that they should have no other home but her house, during their stay, determined the ladies to consent to that arrangement. Her Ladyship was, if the whole truth must be acknowledged, at the moment of writing this letter, in a most terrible alarm. She saw plainly that Strathallan's first interview with Matilda, on his return, must have brought all her past misdemeanours to light; and she hoped, by civility, to ensure silence, if she could not revive esteem. Not that she had to reproach herself, in her original scheme, with any intention deeply culpable. To produce between the lovers some misunderstanding, that it would be difficult to clear up, had been the extent of the ambition of her plotting Ladyship. Had she been a dramatist, her conceptions would never have proved dark and atrocious enough for the horrors of tragedy. The embarrassments of a farce, or trag-i-comedy at most, would have bounded her attempts. She was far from a female Catiline: but her talents would perhaps have

made no contemptible figure in the ridiculously intriguing court of a Duchesse Du Maine. Disdaining to resent her conduct, Mrs. and Miss Melbourne affected not to perceive the forced air of this invitation, and, preceded by Strathallan, bade a pleased adieu, for some time, to the Rocks. Emily accompanied them, and Julia, without whom Emily now declared she could enjoy no pleasure completely.

The reception Lord Torrendale gave Matilda was truly paternal; but the Countess, who had been influenced in her concessions by fear alone, found it impossible, in her presence, any longer to feign an interest she was so far from feeling. Concealing her mingled grief, shame, and disappointment, under the appearance of languor and indisposition, she apologized for not rising from the couch on which she lay, indolently extended. She "had been very ill, and kept her bed for several days." This, in a degree, excused the alteration in her manner to her once "dear, delightful" Matilda; it was indeed sufficiently sullen, but the happy are

not extreme to mark the conduct that, to the diffident and the wretched might give offence. Matilda, with her usual soothing attention, condoled with her Ladyship on her indisposition : while Lord Torrendale, never tired with contemplating the health which glowed in the cheeks of his darling Emily, and the improvement in every respect which time and instruction had, during the interval of their separation, produced in her mind, expressed his obligations to her invaluable friends, with a grace, a warmth, and energy, of which they had, till then, thought him incapable.

“ You confer on us an obligation,” he said, “ to which fortune is poor in comparison. You have restored to me a daughter ; for every opening merit Emily now possesses is your work.”

Touched and delighted, Matilda, while he spoke, felt, for one instant, reminded of Strathallan ; after a long and animated conversation, in which it was almost forgotten that the Gipsey Countess, (as she still continued to be styled by her familiars,) lolled discontentedly on a sofa in the room. The

Earl suddenly turning to Julia Melbourne, kindly exclaimed, "Shall this be another daughter?"

The little girl who, in silent but deep emotion, had remarked the tender reception Emily met from her parent, replied with a piercing accent, "No, I am no daughter—I have neither father nor mother—and to-day I have lost my mamma a second time."

"I am your mother," said Mrs. Melbourne tenderly embracing her, "you shall now, dear Julia, be all my pleasure."

"But my most loved, my little mamma," said Julia, unable any longer to suppress her tears, "she will love me no more—no," continued the interesting child, sobbing, while she threw her arms round Matilda's neck, "from the moment *he* came, I saw you had no longer any affection to spare for me—I saw you would forget your poor Julia."

"Heaven forbid that I should part you!" cried Strathallan, touched and charmed with a jealous delicacy of affection, at her age so rare; "Will you forgive me, Julia," he continued, "the involuntary pain I have inflicted

on you, while I thus engage, for my Matilda, to adopt you as our own."

Matilda, with tender and joyful readiness, ratified the promise, and harmony was restored among the happy circle.

Mrs. Melbourne having received from her legal friends the most satisfactory assurances respecting the validity of her daughter's claims to Sir Harold's legacy, and the impossibility of their being disputed with success, had, now, leisure to attend to those, at once trifling and important subjects of dress and decoration, without which, even a Matilda must have appeared, to the world of fashion, as a star shorn of its beams. She had long ago satisfied her pecuniary debt to her friend Arbella; but there was a debt of the heart, which she thought kindness alone could pay, and therefore wished much to request her presence at the important change in her situation, that was now approaching. But Arbella, though her reply marked the exultation she felt at her friend's good fortune, was not at liberty to attend to the invitation her letter contained. She was a mother; and,

absorbed in the pleasing cares her little boy required, found, in them, at once the cause and compensation for many sacrifices.

A present, from Lord Torrendale to his lady, of a dress of the most surpassing elegance, for the expected nuptials, revived, in the bosom of the Countess, her half-extinguished love of display. And wisely considering it would be rather awkward not to recover her health till the very day on which she wished to appear to such advantage, she immediately exchanged her chaise-longue for an Ottoman; discovered that airings were particularly beneficial to her, and kindly accompanied Mrs. and Miss Melbourne to make all their purchases, till her attentions were in danger of becoming as troublesome, as her previous neglect had been pointed. Proud of her accurate knowledge in dress, the only science she professed, her Ladyship insisted on deciding upon every article; and it was almost ludicrous to see the importance she assumed, and the seriousness of countenance with which she examined, re-examined, took up, and laid down every piece of silk,

muslin, and lace, submitted to her inspection; and, at length, in a slow and hesitating voice pronounced—not “that she was satisfied,” for she never was so, but that, “perhaps if nothing better could be got it might—possibly do,” and then the rich bales, and elegant patterns were to be sent home to be looked at, criticised, folded, unfolded, and at length frequently sent back with a message, that there was nothing in them which would exactly suit. Besides the length of time these protracted negotiations necessarily took up, another inconvenience, attended her Ladyship’s shopping with them. She piqued herself not only on getting every thing the best, but the cheapest that could possibly be procured; and these desires being often contradictory, she made her companions blush at her meanness, in insisting upon a price below the value of the article for which she bargained, when, if she had not interfered, they could have arranged every thing to their own satisfaction. One morning, that in pursuance of this plan, for which the Countess thought herself en-

titled to the eternal gratitude of her friends, she had not only completely tired *their* patience, but that of half the milliners in town, she was attracted by the showy appearance of a milliner's and dress-maker's shop, that had lately been opened in a fashionable street; and remarking, "that new beginners were apt to be reasonable in their demands, in order to tempt people to go again," she pulled the check, and alighted with Mrs. and Miss Melbourne. Two girls were in the shop, already engaged with other ladies: a plain young woman, genteelly drest, who appeared to be the mistress, asked her Ladyship's commands. Lady Torrendale had run in without looking at the name over the door, but Matilda thought it impossible she should not recollect the face. While she was examining lace head-dresses and veils, the Countess, who began to grow impatient, and who had a happy knack of saying obliging things to her inferiors, exclaimed, "Lord, you know we can never guess how these caps would look, unless they were tried upon a pretty woman--are

not either of your young Misses disengaged?" then turning to Matilda, "Pray recollect Miss Melbourne that it is growing late, and that we have promised by four to meet Strathallan at Gray's."

A faint blush, which tinged the sallow cheek of the young woman at the name of Strathallan, changed the doubt of the fair bride-elect into certainty; and Miss Langrish, though awe-struck and distanced by the haughty and unacknowledging stare of Lady Torrendale, was not afraid to meet with a look of recognition, the soft and encouraging smile of Matilda. "Common report then does not this time err," she said, "and I have to congratulate your Ladyship," turning to the Countess, "on the addition, which the beauty, and amiable qualities like Miss Melbourne's, must make to the happiness of your family."

"It is to that Lady your congratulations should be addressed," replied Lady Torrendale, coldly designating Mrs. Melbourne.

Miss Langrish, though somewhat disconcerted, ventured to mention her having lately

entered into business, with the patronage and liberal assistance of her constant friends, Lady N. and Mrs. Murray; and to hope, that she also might have to boast of her Ladyship's encouragement; "I had something to struggle with at first," she said, "but have now the fairest prospects of success; and am, as I ought to be, thankful, and extremely happy."

"Humph," cried the Lady, as who should say "What matter whether *you* are happy or not," and hurried to her carriage, while Matilda, bestowing upon her one of those angel smiles which raise the humble and doubting heart, assured her of her good will, and every kind assistance in her power; and received with a graciousness, which quite restored the spirits of the *ci-devant* governess, the card that she humbly presented.

Leaving Miss Langrish in a situation that suited her talents so much better than that of an instructress of youth, we will return to Lord Torrendale, who, one morning, rather surprised his son by abruptly proposing "He should spend his honey-moon at Rose-villa.

“ Rose-villa !” exclaimed Lady Torrendale in a tone of ill-disguised resentment; “ when I wanted it you said it was sold to Lord Lyndhurst.”

“ So it was, but now Lord Lyndhurst wants it no longer, and has sold it again to me. His lady has lately found out that one cannot be a *bel-esprit* for nothing; whoever applauded her muse obtained ready access not only to her ear but her purse; and having, like some others, assumed a character which she wanted both discernment to exercise with usefulness, and ability to maintain with dignity, she has been the dupe of flattering dedicators and necessitous poets, till poor Lyndhurst has found himself necessitated to part with a substantial brick-built, modern residence, (to speak in the style of the Advertisers,) which I believe he greatly preferred to the air-built castles of her Ladyship’s inspired favorites. I hear there is much required to restore it to the state in which I parted with it, so as you never approved of my taste, Lady Torrendale, I shall appoint Strathallan my chief surveyor, with unlimited

powers to knock down, or raise up ; and if he is able to hit upon additions suitable to his taste, he may put them into execution, and take it for his pains. When tired of considering the beauties of Rose-villa he may join us in Derbyshire, you know."

Strathallan was delighted with the kind solicitude with which his father strove to make him amends for the sacrifice he had always lamented, and endeavoured to prevent ; but the abode once so dear to him of the estate that bore his son's name, on account of its recalling the memory of his mother, was now profaned and altered ; and could a sigh have obtained it back again, he would not, to obtain it, have given that sigh. His departure for Rose-villa, and all the other arrangements, were therefore settled with that facility and delight which is ever taken in forming plans of happiness. As for Lord Torrendale, his predilection for his native seat had its origin in a singular circumstance.

Walking one day upon those hills that formed an amphitheatre around, a breeze had suddenly sprung up, which inspired his heart

with a vivifying sensation, an enjoyment of life, more complete and delightful than he had ever before or afterwards experienced. No wonder then that the scene became endeared to a man, whose natural habits were melancholy and contemplative. He declared that now he saw his son once more restored to his wishes, and at length secure in the possession of happiness and honours, equal to his high deserts, he no longer felt those anxieties which could lead him to mix any more in the tumults of the gay or the great world; he held to no party; and his absences, for the future, should be but of rare occurrence, and short duration, from his favourite seat. This resolution did not agree at all with the inclinations of his Lady, who protested that another autumn passed in Derbyshire, would be destruction to her nerves; but Lord Torrendale saying he wished it might be so, and that if she were to be carried in a horse-litter she should go, her Ladyship found it better to submit to what she knew to be irremediable, and contented herself with inviting Mrs. Melbourne, whose wit, at once

amused and terrified her, and as many more agreeable people as she could collect, to share her dreadful solitude.

For a short time before her marriage, nothing was talked of but the beauty of the young bride, the splendour with which her nuptials would be celebrated, and the impression her first appearance must undoubtedly create. She alone, insensible to all that passed around her, was alive only to the happiness of soon confirming her claim to the undivided care, the fond affections of Strathallan. On the day which gave her to his wishes, every surrounding object seemed to vanish before the delighted pair; too happy to be gay, Strathallan, when for the first time he embraced his own Matilda, and all the past rushed to his memory, enhancing the present joy, could only by a silence, deep-felt, and well understood by his beloved, indulge the feelings which oppressed his heart. Mrs. Melbourne, as she returned her daughter's embrace, her cheek still wet with the tears Matilda shed on quitting a mother's care, though even for a protector so dear;

said to her amiable Lord ; " I give you in my child, a treasure, which I hope will ever constitute your happiness ; not from that beauty that now enchanteth your eye, or the graces that so long have captivated your heart, but because in her, the affections have ever superseded the passions ; while passion, pure, generous, and elevated, held in its turn a place above the petty interests and vanities of life. Such should be ever the gradations of feeling in the well-regulated mind of woman ; and must not such a character excite in those that can best appreciate it, more than common tenderness, more than common regret ? "

Rose-villa and its surrounding wilderness of ground, laid out in the most pleasing, yet fanciful and romantic taste, was a charming solitude, just suited for the reception of lovers who had fled from the world, to taste, unmixed, that cup of happiness it never could bestow. There, in the enjoyment of a bliss, pure as their virtues, great as their deserts, Matilda and her Strathallan at length found themselves permitted to yield, without reserve, to that tenderness, for which both

were equally formed ; from which both had been equally excluded, which they had resisted so nobly ; and now indulged without one self-upbraiding recollection to mingle its corrosive bitter with their present happiness. Often when wandering, supported by her Strathallan, she tasted the cool evening breeze beneath the moon-beam that streamed along their silent path, and seemed formed to light their love ; Matilda secretly sighed, with pensive, timid gratitude. “ Oh ! when I would remember that life is but a vain and fleeting shadow, I must not call to mind those soft delighted hours when I bend to hear *him* whisper again the enchanting vow that he is mine, that he will be ever only mine ; when, unreproved, I at length drink from those eyes, sweet draughts of added love, and hear him, in return, breathe the deep, long-drawn sigh of tender, conscious happiness.”

She compared the security and fulness of bliss she now enjoyed, to the moments of uneasiness and embarrassment she had experienced three years before, at Woodlands, when she blushed at being even suspected of

an involuntary interest in the then unknown warrior's safety ; and, while retracing all her former anxieties, she blessed heaven those hours were past, never to return ; but, perhaps she was wrong ; for, could she have recalled, at will, in all its vivid charms, the first dawn of infant passion, the first bright, kindling glance of full requited love, she would have owned, that the vow which confirmed her ever his, conveyed scarcely more pleasure to her heart, than the sweet, struggling tumult of hope's earliest sigh.

A letter, from her mother, informed Matilda that Mrs. Melbourne had, as she styled it, actually taken compassion on the unhappy Countess, and was, for the present, established, with Julia, at Woodlands. As she was a professed enemy to every kind of *gossip*, her letter contained little farther news ; and it was reserved for Mrs. Sowerby to inform her friend of the wonderful changes that had lately taken place in her neighbourhood, by the last letter we shall communicate from

ARBELLA TO MATILDA.

Clifden-down.

“ From the Eden of happy lovers, can Matilda, Strathallan’s Matilda, attend to the voice of friendship, in the congratulations of her Arbella? I will believe she can; and, therefore, rejoice with my friend, rejoice with her sincerely, to see her add to the number of those happy and distinguished fair ones, who have spirit and courage enough to reward our beloved heroes, on their return from their glorious toils. But have a care, Matilda! bind him fast with chains of roses, or, at the fantastic call of honour, the dear creature will again escape you. Surely she, who, in these times, unites her fate to that of a warrior, has need to be more or less than mortal! You see I am kindly endeavouring to mingle a few imaginary evils with your sum of real bliss; and am I not right? for ‘ fear and sorrow fan the fire of joy;’ and we must still clasp, with the fondest transport, *that* treasure to our

breast, of which, the next moment may, for ever, deprive us. I, too, have my joys; and not small ones they are. Silence, master Theophilus, you little monkey! am I never to do any thing but play with you? I think you might suffer me to write to my friend, particularly when it is in praise of you. I beseech you to believe, Matilda, that the boy already promises to have, 'All his father's sense,' united to 'his mother's beauty!' so you see he bids fair to be a little prodigy. And now, while thus supremely happy in the society of each other, I dare say you imagine, as all lovers have done before you, that no fond pair can live and love like you. How much you are mistaken! Believe me it requires neither the heart, the soul, nor the face of a Matilda, to inspire a passion, ardent, violent, sincere; and of course, prevailing; and this I shall undertake to prove, by opening my Buxton Chronicle: for my good man being willing to give me every reasonable pleasure, and determined that, 'Verily-a, he and I should be first in the thrcng,' forced me, notwithstanding my

protestations of indifference to gaiety, to spend last month there. That you may completely understand the adventure, which has made so much noise, that hardly any thing else is talked of; I must remind you, my constant swain, and cousin of my heart, was on the point of marriage, when you left us, with a rich, 'West stingy widow,' as my aunt calls her, 'a sweet pretty creeter, as he had been courting of a long time, with balls and suppers, and what not.' You surely must recollect the little widow Cypress, who was so much admired last season, because she was pretty, rich, and, for the rest, as, Pope describes it 'no character at all;' the widow of a man, who adored her while living, and had shown, that his regard extended beyond the grave, by bequeathing to her, without reserve or limitation, the whole of his property; she had yet become, before she left off her mourning, the gayest of the gay. In short, a mere drest and painted doll, only that Miss Dolly knew how to sit up and behave itself at a ball; good-tempered, without effort; good-natured, be-

cause it would have given her trouble to be otherwise. And good-natured she must have been, to have admitted the suit of my cousin. He had, however, a formidable rival to encounter; no less a one than my heroic admirer Major O'Hara, who last summer made some progress in the affections of the kind-hearted widow, which he did not lessen by taking the trouble of returning from Ireland, a month or two ago, to remind her of his claim. What chance had the uninviting exterior, frigid reserve, and inelegant pride, of poor Sam, against the continued fire kept up by military ardour, and Hibernian gallantry, like the Major's. Being determined to give the neighbourhood something to talk of, and, accordingly to render my cousin's mortification more complete, they, (I can hardly help laughing when I think of it,) agreed to go off together from a public breakfast at Buxton, given by the poor duped lover, in honour of his charming widow. The company was distributed in *Marquées*, snow-white as the lady's innocence, gay as her smiles of love. A band

of music attended—every thing was harmony and good-humour. Mrs. Cypress rolled her eyes, smiled on one, complimented another, talked of love and poetry, till Sam, betrayed into the expression of more than usual pleasure and complaisance, thought of nothing but looking in the fair widow's eyes, and beating time to the air she had commanded. When, at that critical juncture, the lady suddenly complained of illness, and left the tent, followed by Major O'Hara; who had conducted her, in a few moments, to a chaise and four, which had been previously ordered near the spot, and, before their intentions could be suspected, they were on their way to London. Since their return, they have taken the most elegant house, and sported the finest carriage and liveries that can possibly be imagined; they give the greatest entertainments; and, in short, the Major seems determined to prove, by the noble manner in which he spends the fortune of the fair widow, how deserving he was “to win her and wear her.” The worst of it is, as my poor aunt told me almost sobbing, that

a *purador* (as she calls it) of 'Shepherds I have lost my love,' has come out entitled, 'The beau tossed in a *blanket*,' or, 'Kidderminster no match for Tipperary.' So that I really think my poor cousin would have gone mad with vexation, if he had not immediately set off for London, by his mother's advice, upon a commission to fall in love with the Widow Molosses. The husband of this Widow Molosses was an eminent sugar-baker, (whom you know nothing about,) I shall, therefore, just inform you, that the saccharine fair one, (very unlike the other) shows herself already so grateful for Sam's tender partiality, that I doubt not she will soon consent to sweeten the mortal cup of mingled bliss and woe for him, 'And make the bitter draught of life go down.'

"Before I leave off the article of Buxton, I must tell you, that Spencer acts at present the most prominent part among the *élégants*. He drives a dashing equipage, not always alone; and exhibits, to advantage, his graceful figure—that, at least, is not injured, poor fellow! and flattering himself,

I suppose, that if not quite so handsome, he is more *interesting* than ever, has resumed, with renovated spirits, his old amusement of breaking hearts. Yet some there are, who since the wound in his eye, scruple not to say he is sadly altered. ‘ Ah, Lindor !’ change how you w^{ould}, there *was* a time when one faithful heart would have still—but no matter. I am now my dear Sowerby’s, and it shall be the ambition of my life to justify his choice. Poor Eyes! for what farther mortifications may he not be yet reserved ! perhaps at this moment, notwithstanding these transient reliefs, he envies the fate of his former friend Lionhart; who, after exposing himself often, in a manner that made it a miracle he escaped so long, fell, gallantly bringing up his troupe at Salamanca. We have been greatly disappointed since the arrival of Spencer’s lady-mother, instead of the expected balls and fêtes, she has taken entirely to her couch; and can hardly be prevailed on to see any one. Poor woman, she labours under a complication of disorders, to which I be-

lieve it would puzzle the faculty to administer relief: decaying beauty, and blasted ambition; to the former she still fondly clings, but, alas! as my old courtly favorite Castiglione says, in a style rather uncourtly,

‘ Si spoglian i serpenti la vecchiezza
E rinovan la scorza insieme e gli anni
Ma fugge e non ritorna la Bellezza
In noi per arte alcuna, o nuovi panni.’

But surely she deserves all she can suffer; for did she not plot against you, and endeavour to break my heart? Sappho and Alcæus have both composed epithalamiums upon a late happy event. If I can procure copies in time I will enclose them. These formidable rivals have at length—I will not absolutely say, embraced; but seriously they had a formal reconciliation last Thursday at Lady Lyndhurst’s. Alcæus promised never again to libel Sappho; and Sappho engaged, on the word of a poet, not to say any thing malicious, more than ten times a day, to Alcæus. Yet, under this hollow truce, I fear, still lurk the embers of many a fierce dissension; at

least if I may judge by the dispositions in which I found Sappho the very day after the treaty. She called, I believe, on purpose to tell me a smart thing she had just said to Alcæus. It seems the unlucky bard prides himself greatly on having planned the fêtes at Woodlands for the return of your heroic Lord, and on having suggested the working the colours that were presented to him. Lady Lyndhurst called him *le petit glorieux*, and said she doubted not he expected his name to go down to posterity in company with that of Lord Strathallan."

" If so," observed Sappho, " we may indeed apply to that pair the epitaph originally made by Piron on Turenne and Marshal Belleisle,

‘ *Ci git le glorieux a coté de la gloire.*’ ”

" My sister-in-law, as I would now call Clara, if she had not renounced all human ties, notices your marriage in her usual sweet affectionate manner. In the last letter I received from her, she asked if a poor nun could be still remembered by you ; and then

after many praises which I shall not transcribe, that I may not encrease your vanity, she adds, 'different are the paths by which we seek the palm of virtue. Your friend has, in the possession of all those blessings her tender and amiable disposition could wish for, perhaps, even in this life, a foretaste of the joys that are in store for her: mine are all in the future, but are not the less consolatory, nor the less sure.' The dear saint always takes care, in the letters, to mingle such counsels as from my peculiar disposition I may most stand in need of, and seems to be endued before her time with a divine prescience, to judge exactly of those dangers to which I may possibly be exposed; her advice is accordingly invaluable, and if ever I neglect it—but I will make no engagements, lest, from the mere spirit of mischief, I should be tempted to break them. Sowerby and I have made a very fair exchange—I persuade him to wear a better coat, and cut his hair a little more fashionably, and he trains my mind to knowledge, and my heart to virtue. The difference between our years is not so

considerable as to prevent my feeling for him the tenderest attachment; and this disparity is, in appearance, considerably lessened, now he has left off that fur cap and strange *roquelaure*, which used to make him when botanizing and herbarizing about in the morning, look really more like a bear in a brown study, than a man. Now when he is shaved and drest, and I have by some innocent rattle attuned his spirits to their happiest pitch, he really looks—not quite a Strathallan, you know. Sowerby bids me say a thousand kind things to you, which I repeat with the more pleasure as you are not here to excite my jealousy. Seriously my best, my earliest, and truest friend, I know not how such a fiend as jealousy can dare intrude upon the pure and exquisite pleasure of contemplating such endearing, unobtrusive, mild perfection. Who shall in future lament her being born a woman, as contracting the sphere of her influence, or diminishing her power of doing good, when your own family furnishes two examples, that on the conduct of our sex, depends the happiness or

misery of all connected with them ? The follies of the ill-fated Lady Julia, embittered a husband's days, shook the reason of a son of affections too tender, yet of a spirit too lofty and refined, either to endure a reflection on his honor, or to tear himself from the unhappy cause of that aspersion, and tinctured the young mind of her deserted daughter with that deep-toned melancholy, which may fatally influence the whole future tenor of her existence, while a Matilda's steady persevering virtues restored a widowed mother's heart to joy, compelled the admiration of a family too slow at first in acknowledging her merits, and at length made that heart her own, which she rejected as long as duty did not sanction the choice. But who am I, who thus dare to deal out praise and blame, as worthy to judge and decide on the conduct of others ? alas ! was I not once in danger of plunging into follies as ruinous, though not errors so great, as those which I now condemn ? Never were the decrees of fate more truly equitable, than in that sentence she has passed upon us both. With advantages in

some respects superior, I neglected many duties ; but my intentions were ever innocent. I am rewarded beyond my deserts ; perhaps not quite according to my earlier wishes. You resigned a lover, such as woman never had, only to bind him in the bonds of fond esteem, more truly, more lastingly yours. When I consider the mournful and strange events, which so fast followed upon each other before your final re-union could take place, I think I see you, like Balsora and her lover, in the beautiful Eastern tale, two pure and lovely spirits, passing hand in hand, through the glooms of death, to the opening gate of Paradise. Go, happy pair, and may never the rude blast of misfortune disturb the Eden, of which your hearts are the centre. Go, blest Matilda, and taste, without fear, the happiness you so well deserve, with your long-lamented, your twice-restored Strathallan."

THE END.



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